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Thomas F. Torrance

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THE CONFIRMING WORK OF RELIGION:

OR,

Its great Things made plain,

By their Primary

EVIDENCES and DEMONSTRATIONS.

Whereby the meaneſt in the Church, may ſoon be made able to render a rational Account of their Faith.

By the late Reverend Mr. ROBERT FLEMING, Author of *the Fulfilling of the Scriptures.*

GLASGOW,

Printed by ROBERT FOULIS, and ſold by him, and other Bookſellers in *Glaſgow* and *Edinburgh.*

MD.CC.XLIII.

THE JUDGEMENT OF SOME *London* Miniſters Concerning this TREATISE.

THings of unqueſtionable Excellence in themſelves, and of greateſt Importance unto our Welfare, have not always the deepeſt and moſt conſtant Thoughts beſtown upon them. Witneſs the Sa-

tisfaction of our Minds about the Matter, and about the Foundations of our holy Christian Faith.

It seems too little observed, but it can never be sufficiently lamented, what we do observe of Protestants Neglect of the Matter of their Faith. And, yet our sad Experience certifies us, that they are incomparably more heedless of acquainting themselves with the Reasons thereof. We have very many that do competently know, what it is to be a Christian, for every single Man that can render a Reason, why he ought to be so.

Storms do make Men look to their Anchors; and we do not know, but awful Judgments are hastening on us, (being remote Ones do not awaken us,) to beat us out of our inconsiderately chosen Refuges. Our precarious and unexamined Confidences, which in very Propriety are but Fancy, and not Faith built upon any solid Grounds. However, we must all needs

needs die; and it is more than probable, that a near Prospect of the future State, may convincingly shew the most obstinate, that the King of Terrors is not to be conquered, and no Miracles are to be wrought by an implicit Faith *. Or by a Way of Religion, that is taken up and walked in, merely for Company.

Wherefore we give our great Thanks to the Author of every good Gift; who hath drawn this his richly furnished Scribe to supply us with so very needful a Treatise as is here offered. Some of us do profess, that in reading it, we were surprized with Joy and with Wonder, that a Topic so little written, discoursed, or thought of, should be treated on with such Depth of Judgment, and with such Experience, as is rarely found in the most laudible Writers.

* Pecudum ritu euntes, non qua eundem est, sed qua itur. *Sen.*

Thro' the divine Bleſſing, which we implore, we hope, that we, and our Brethren, throughout theſe Nations, ſhall find good Succeſs of our Peoples Uſe of this moſt inſtructive Work. For which, with the excellent Author, (who did but conſent to this Edition of it;) we are indebted unto * the Reverend and Worthy Publiſher,

* Mr. *Daniel Burgeſs*, whoſe Character is well known; his *Recommendatory Preface* follows: The higheſt Angels are moſt humble Creatures; the Church of God is full of their Services, but knoweth next to nothing of their Names. Their Works praiſe their Lord and ours, but not themſelves. And if the Evangelical Author of this Book could have had his Will, the Churches of Chriſt ſhould not have had his Name. He would have kept himſelf together a Benefactor, and a Sort of Stranger unto them.

Againſt his Will, it came to be known, that his Book of the *Fulfilling of the Scriptures* was his. And by the divine Providence, it was made neceſſary, that his latter Works ſhould bear his Name. Obſcurity was his Ambition; tho' his Gifts and Graces prove too big and too bright to be covered. And, in ſhort, it hath pleaſed the Supream Ruler and Fountain of Honour, to honour him, whether he would or no.

The Book firſt named, is followed with the Eulogies of greateſt Divines; and is a Manna ſweet to the Taſte

Publiſher, by whoſe Means we receive it. We join with both of them, in Prayer to the moſt High, that this rich Seed of the Sower may be made Bread of Life to the Eater.

WILLIAM BATES,
MATTHEW MEAD,
THOMAS COLE,
JOHN HOWE,
MATTHEW SYLVESTER,
DANIEL WILLIAMS,
JOHN SHOWERS.

Taſte of all ſerious Chriſtians. His *Epiſtolary Diſcourſe*, dedicated to the Queen's Majeſty, hath been moſt graciouſly accepted by her; and highly valued by thoſe that I muſt think of the beſt of her Subjects. Being, as his Diſcourſe of Earthquakes, a Treaſure of Things old and new; *Michtum*'s golden *Jewels*. Arguments, ſeveral, not ſo much as touched by any Pen within her Dominions, or beyond them, ſave Mr. *Fleming*'s.

Nevertheleſs, it is of this his Treatiſe, that I would ſay, with Submiſſion to better Judgments, there is none like it. Herein it is, that I think he hath ſingularly honoured his God, and, I believe, his God will very ſingularly honour him. For, is any Diſeaſe more mortal or more epidemical, than *Popiſh* implicit Faith? And is there any to be named, againſt which, we are ſo deſtitute of Medicines? Is there extant, in *Engliſh*,

English, or any *European* Language, any one *rationale* of Christianity, in Method suited to them, who do most need it? Hath any one Writer, beside our Author, set himself to teach Minors the primary Evidences and reasonable Demonstrations of Christian Faith? I will con him my best Thanks who shall name me so much as one.

How sound, and how generous a Medicine this Treatise is, let the Wise judge, I declare it to be the only one, that on no slight Enquiry I have heard of. Being so, I no sooner read it, but I blessed it, and its unknown Author. Privately and publickly I praised it, and finding it not to be had in our Shops, nor but from *Holland*, if from thence, to be gotten, I presently resolved to re-print it. Soon after, hearing who was the Author, and where he was, I sent him notice of that my fixed Resolution, whether he consented to it or no. For thus, I argued, that if he were of the heavenly Spirit, breathing in his Book, he could not gainsay it, and if he were of another Spirit, for the Church's Service, it would be innocent and praise-worthy to cross it. But, blessed be God, and blessed be he from his Lord and mine, he readily forgave me this Wrong, and cheerfully I proceeded.

No Lion found I in my Way; but a sorry Worm I counted the Exclamations of some nice Folk, against the Phrase and Style of this confessedly excellent Work. Dutifully I compassionated the Weak; and no less the many Sick, of Curiosity. Who have such Ulcers in their Palates, that they cannot, without cruel Pain, swallow the most desireable Dainties, unless they may take them in Oil and Sugar. Cannot prevail with-selves to read Periods, that require an attentive Mind, and the least Strain of their Understanding. Where-

fore

fore I used my Spunge, and took out as many Expressions of my Author's native Language, as I thought would disturb an *English* Reader. Substituting such as appeared sufficiently intelligible. Which being done, the Bookseller was wise enough to set the Press going.

I signified my Purpose to catechise Youth publickly in the Positions and Characters of this Book, one Lord's-Day; as in *Westminster Assembly's Catechism*, on the other by Course. Which Practice other Ministers soon told me, that they would take up. As, I trust many more would do, forasmuch, as none can be unsensible what Multitudes of Men do go to grass on this Side the *Alps*, as well as on the other; and what a fantastick Faith common Protestants do rest in, as well as Romanists. Making Show of a Faith, as the Moon of a Light, whereof not any is in themselves rooted. Sadly it is seen of all, how too too properly we are still named *Britains*; the Faith of most being such a Paint, as cannot but melt and vanish in any Trial that is fiery.

Brit, is painted, *Tain*, is a Nation.

Memorable are the Words of the learned unhappy *Spalato*, to this Effect as I remember. *To say, that I do not myself know, why I do believe a Religious Article, but yet I do believe it, because the Church in which I am doth believe it; it is the self-same as to say, I do not myself open one of my Eyes, but yet I do see the Thing spoken of, because the Company in which I am doth see it.* The good Lord lessen among us the Number of Men so absurd, and so plainly void of Faith! He hath already made the Leaves of this Book so healing unto some, that in great Hopes I commend them unto all. And especially to the Societies of young

Ἀτοποι.

Men,

Men, that hold weekly ſtated Meetings for edifying Conference. In which, as I tell thoſe of my own Charge, they ſhall not find more eligible Arguments than this Book ſtores them with. Happy they, if, in the beſt Senſe, they do make them their own! Lord encreaſe holy Faith, and quench fiery Faction; ſo prayeth,

Bridges-ſtreet, near *Covent-Garden*, *Feb.* 28. DANIEL BURGESS.

POSTSCRIPT.

Underſtanding the Foreign Churches *want of this* Work, *as well as our own, I purpoſe ere long to tranſlate, and ſend it forth in the* Latin Tongue. *Unleſs ſome good Hand of more Leiſure do prevent me.*

THE

THE AUTHOR'S

PREFACE.

THIS *small Treatise here offered, is one of the greatest Subjects that can fall under the Consideration of Mankind; and is a Study, which was never more pressingly called for, than in these Days for making Peace with God, and gaining such an Assurance of his Truth, as may fully quiet and support the Soul, tho' all sensible Props should be broken and fail. Great Changes do surely hasten on this Generation, and the* Life of Faith, *is in another Manner like to be*

be put to Trial, than since the Churches Rise and Recovery from Antichristian *Bondage. The Storm now visibly grows upon the Churches of Christ, tho' nothing ought to faint or shake the Spirits of any, who know their Anchor is sure and cast within the Vail; but the strongest Difficulties, in following the Lord, when overcome, yield the greatest Victory, and will be not only Matter of Joy here, but to all Eternity, in having with Patience and Hope endured, and got well through a Throng of Temptations and Assaults, in a resolute Adherence to the Truth. If Men think it their Wisdom to secure their private Interest, by dividing it in such a Time from the public Cause of the Reformed Church, and make Light of the greatest Truths of God now assaulted, of the Blood of the Martyrs, yea, of their own eternal State, by any Coolness or shrinking from the same; they will find no temporal Motives can ever compensate that Loss and Ruin which inevitably*

bly will meet such in the Issue. Yea, that these Words of Mordecai *to* Esther, (*Esth.* iv. 13, 14.) *have the same Voice and Weight in this Day. What is held forth in the following Work, I may with humble Confidence say, was under some Pressure to have such clear Evidence and quieting Persuasion of divine Truth, as made it less easy to have my own Spirit satisfied herein, than possibly it may be to others; for, if it were not from that blessed Assurance of the Lord's being God, of the Revelation of Christ, and of the Glory to come, I should not know what could be comforting, or make a rational Being desireable. Some singular Engagements I judge myself also to stand under, for putting to my Seal to the Truth and Faithfulness of God in his Word, from many signal Confirmations hereof in the Course of my Pilgrimage, if such a poor Testimony might be of any Weight. Let the blessed Lord, graciously accept this small Offering to him,*

for the Intereſt of his Truth, by ſo mean an Inſtrument, and give ſome Fruit hereof, that may abide, and be found in the Day of Chriſt.

I hope the Reader may find, by a Peruſual of the firſt Chapter, *of what ſerious Uſe and Intent the* Second *is, yea, that in this Day, it was not unſeaſonable or incongruous to the foregoing Subject what is held forth in the* third Chapter. *But, Oh! it is ſad and amazing to think, how few are under that Weight of Religion, as once to have a ſerious Enquiry on the Grounds and Reaſons thereof, and to account the moſt ſpecial Aſſiſtances to their Faith, to be the greateſt Helpers of their Joy within Time.*

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THE

THE

TRUE AND INFALLIBLE

WAY

For attaining a confirmed State in

RELIGION.

CHAP. I.

The Primitive Confirmation in the Truth of CHRISTIANITY, *held forth and cleared, in its continued Neceſſity and Uſe to this Day, in* SEVEN POSITIONS.

POSIT. I. THAT *nothing can be of a more ſad and threatning Aſpect on the preſent State of Religion in all the Churches of* CHRIST,

than that utter Eſtrangement, moſt are under, to the true Grounds of Faith, and to thoſe fundamental Differences betwixt Chriſtianity, and every falſe Way, which no pretended Religion can lay claim to.

The Reaſons of the POSITION, are theſe,

I. THAT it is too viſibly manifeſt, how no Men in the World know ſo little of their own Profeſſion, of any human Art or Science, as ſuch who bear the Name of *Chriſtians*. Or are ſo generally Strangers to the Truth and Firmneſs of the Principles thereof, for maintaining either a due Valuation, or powerful Senſe of the ſame on their Soul; ſo that an implicit and *traditional Profeſſion* is the only Part and Propriety which moſt can claim in the Truth, and Doctrine they profeſs.

II. THAT very rarely alſo is any ſerious, perſonal Enquiry and Trial, if there be indeed ſuch a Thing, as an *Experimental and Soul-quickning Religion* in the Earth. That can bear the Expence of the moſt diſmal and afflicting Times, and hath ſo great a temporal Revenue, as Peace with GOD, an immediate Communion

munion with him, the Joy and Comforts of the HOLY GHOST, when we are under such Pressures of Trouble as are above the Support of Nature.

III. THAT the furthest Account, why most go under the Name of *Christians*, rather than of any other Form, can rise no higher than Custom and Education, that it did bespeak them from their Birth, and was the Religion of their Ancestors; yea, become in that Manner natural to them, as the Customs and Language of their Country. Which are Grounds that would determine to the very opposite Profession, if they were stated under the same Circumstances, and had the same Motives to be *Mahometans*; since it is sure these can found no other Assent, than is suitable to the Nature and Strength thereof.

IV. THAT, thus it is plain, the most numerous Part of visible Professors, are destitute of any Defence from internal Motives, and solid Conviction of the Truth they profess, upon its own Evidence; and there was never more Cause to fear some unusual Apostacy from the very visible Profession of CHRIST, upon any violent Trial and Assault this Way.

When ſuch find it more eaſy to render up their Religion, than to adhere to the ſame, under ſtrong Temptations, who yet never knew that Subſtance, Advantage, or Certainty herein, as could proponderate with the Want of all external Motives for ſuch a Profeſſion.

POSIT. II. *THAT this one of the higheſt Services of theſe Times, for the public Good of the Church, does convincingly lie here; to have* the Faith of Aſſent *to the Truth and Doctrine of* CHRIST, *in a clear and firm Certainty of the Judgment, on its own Evidence, more vigorouſly promoted, and the proper Means and Aſſiſtances, which the* LORD *hath given for this End, in ſome other Manner yet improved, than ſeems to be at this Day, for a more univerſal Uſe.*

THE Grounds to inforce the Neceſſity hereof, are theſe;

I. THAT 'tis ſure wherever the Goſpel is revealed to Men, it comes with ſo full an Aſſurance of Underſtanding, and Sufficiency of objective Evidence, as can admit of no poſſible Doubtfulneſs herein. Which is the Credit and Glory of our Religion,

Religion, that in no other Way it doth require Acceptance, but with the furtheſt Conviction of Evidence.

II. BECAUSE the expreſs Deſign and Tendency of this bleſſed Revelation, is no leſs to found ſuch a rational Aſſurance in the Judgment, of its Truth, than to ingage the Will and Conſent for embracing thereof; and tho' ſuch great Demonſtrations for this End can only, *in ſuo genere*, have a convincing Influence to perſuade the Underſtanding, yet are they of ſuch Weight here, as next to the Demonſtration of the Spirit of GOD, they are the greateſt Means to bring up Mens Aſſent to a full and quieting Reſt on that Security to which they muſt truſt themſelves forever, and to let them ſee, that this even here by the Way, is aſſuredly full, though not yet their Enjoyment.

III. BECAUSE this Faith of Aſſent, ſhould be firſt followed in the Order of Nature, as being the very firſt Principle of Converſion, to know and be ſure, that GOD hath ſent his Son into the World to ſave Sinners; wherein as the Holy Ghoſt is not the Objective, but the efficient Cauſe of our Faith, ſo is not the

internal Work and Teſtimony, he gives on the Soul the firſt Teſtimony, but muſt ſtill have Reſpect to the Revelation of the Word without, and ſuch demonſtrative Evidences thereof, wherewith it is revealed to the World. Nor may any ever ſeparate, that which GOD hath himſelf ſo indiſſolubly joined.

IV. THAT there is ſo convincing a Neceſſity and Uſe hereof to the Church, and in a ſpecial Way with reſpect to the Youth, for a more firm laying of the Ground-work of their Chriſtian Profeſſion, and for the Seed-plot of a bleſſed and deſirable Growth amongſt ſuch in this Day; that they might thus know early, ſomething of theſe primary Grounds and Demonſtrations of their Faith; ſo alſo is it a Study of that high Importance, as I humbly judge ſhould be of notable Uſe for a Manuduction, in the firſt Place to Students of Divinity, before they launch forth in that vaſt and immenſe Ocean of the ſpeculative Part thereof; and for being at ſome greater Advantage thus for carrying on ſuch a confirming Work in the Church in their future Service.

V. YEA,

V. YEA, of what Use might this be, with respect to many, who may be sore haunted, with hidden and dreadful Temptations to Infidelity, and to weaken them in the very Foundations of their Faith; who are wholly unfurnished of any such Grounds and Arguments in their Judgment to repel the same: And it is certain, that to believe firmly the History of the Gospel, that GOD was manifested in our Nature, to save Man, is with respect to the Object, a much higher Act of Faith, than to believe, that he will save us; since as the one doth unspeakably more transcend all human Reason than the other, so doth the Apostle thus argue from the greater to the less, *Rom.* viii. 32. that he who gave his own Son to the Death; will he not also with him give us all Things?

POSIT. III. *THAT such a confirming Work, was most specially followed in the Practice of the Primitive Times, and one of the great Ends of the Ministry of the* Apostles and Evangelists, *to have this Faith of Assent and Doctrinal Certainty thereof, on its proper Grounds and Evidences, deeply founded in Mens Judgment;*

ment; is so clear as cannot come under Debate.

I. THAT this Way did the great Author of our Profession himself take, not only by the Authority of his Word, and the Power and Energy of Grace, but with that convincing Evidence and Demonstration of his Truth to Mens Understanding, as might found also a firm and rational Assurance hereof.

II. THAT for this End he did pray the Father, *John* xvii. 21. and was so much pressed herein, that so great an external Demonstration of the Truth of the Gospel, in the Concord and Unity of his People, might be kept clear, that the World might thus believe that he was sent of GOD, and have a deeper Conviction hereof wrought in them, by such an Evidence.

III. THAT one special Intent of the Gospel of *Luke*, was for this End, *Luke* i. 4. That Men might know, not only the Things themselves by a naked Relation, but the Certainty of these Things, wherein they had been formerly instructed.

IV. THAT

IV. THAT herein did the Miniſtry of *Apollos* ſo brightly ſhine forth, *Acts* xviii. 28. And was then of moſt ſingular Uſe to the Church, by that Clearneſs of rational Conviction and demonſtrative Arguments for the Truth of CHRIST, as the greateſt Gainſayers could not withſtand.

V. THAT 'tis ſure, it was then without Exception, expreſly required of the meaneſt within the Church, to be always ready to render the Reaſons of their Hope to all who asked: And not only to know what they did believe, but why they did ſo, as is clear, 1 *Pet.* iii. 15. This could not be by bringing forth of internal Evidences, for Conviction of others, but by giving them an Account of the moſt cogent Grounds and Demonſtrations of the Goſpel, as might be moſt prevalent, and confirming to the Weak, and leave others inexcuſable: And ſeems to have been then ſpecially preſſed in theſe Primitive Times, as a proper Teſt of their Chriſtian Profeſſion.

VI. AND we ſee herein alſo, how much theſe excellent *Bereans* were taken up, and were ſo highly commended of the *Holy Ghoſt*, *Acts* xvii. 11. To know the

the *demonstrative* Part of Christianity, and by its own Evidence, with that intire Harmony and Consent of the Scripture therein, and their being thus diligently intent in that comparing Work of Religion, to see the Truth thereof, not singly, and apart by themselves alone, but in that joint Union and Coherence wherein they stand, each in their own Room, for confirming and giving Light to other.

VII. That this was the Way also, wherein the Gospel did come to the *Gentile* Church, is clearly shewed, 1 *Thess.* i. 5. *Not in Word only, but as in Power, and in the Holy Ghost, so also in much Assurance of Understanding, upon its own Evidence*, which was that Way, it did so wonderfully prevail over the World against Nature, and the Stream of Flesh and Blood, that stood in the furthest Opposition thereto.

VIII. That one of the greatest Services of the Apostles in their visiting the Churches, did expresly lie here, *Acts* xiv. 22. To confirm the Souls of the Disciples, in the first Place, in the Certainty of their Faith, and then in exhorting them to continue in the same, so as they might follow the Lord, with the

the furtheſt Light and Aſſurance of Mind, amidſt the great Trials of ſuch a Time.

IX. THAT 'tis this Way alſo the World is rendered inexcuſable for their Miſbelief of the Goſpel, when under ſuch Sufficiency of Means given for this End, by ſo great a Diſcovery of the confirming Evidences of its Truth, ſo as they can have no Pretence herein, but an Obſtinacy and Reſolution not to be convinced; on which Ground doth our bleſſed LORD teſtify, that it was no Want of Light, upon the Certainty of his Truth, why Men did not receive it, but that they loved Darkneſs better than Light, becauſe their Deeds were evil; and when ſuch clear, rational, and convincing Evidences are laid open to their View, how moſt Men poſſibly can get theſe put by or rejected, is not eaſy to comprehend, but that a real Irritation and torment of Spirit, from ſuch Clearneſs of Evidence, doth thus more tend to harden than convince.

POSIT. IV. *THAT there is a continued Neceſſity of ſuch a* Confirmation in the Faith *to this Day, whatever can be objected of ſo long a Conſent and Preſcription*

ſcription of Time in the Profeſſion thereof, is fully demonſtrable on theſe Grounds.

I. BECAUSE, it is ſure, the Chriſtian Faith doth ſtill need theſe Aſſiſtances, and it is a ſtrange Miſtake, that only for *Heathens* and *Atheiſts*, ſuch confirming Evidences of the ſame ſhould be propoſed, but not for any under a viſible Profeſſion, when the whole of *Divinity*, and *Doctrine* of *our Faith*, is ſo full of demonſtrative Arguments, for the daily Uſe of the moſt eſtabliſhed Chriſtians in their Paſſage through Time.

II. THAT as the higheſt Motives to all ſerious Godlineſs, and the moral Duties of Chriſtianity, muſt needs be from its known Certainty to us, ſo is the continued Uſe thereof to be ſtill the ſame.

III. THAT theſe numerous Trials and Conflicts of Chriſtians now, do no leſs call for ſome higher Eſtabliſhment in the Truth, on which they muſt alone reſt, when all viſible Props fail in their Judgments, than of ſupporting Grace; nor is it conceivable, how Men can this Day walk in the Light of any true Joy and Comfort, without a more ſolid Aſ-

ſurance

ſurance of their being on ſafe Grounds herein than moſt ſeem to reckon.

IV. BECAUSE the Revelation of the Goſpel, and of an eternal State in another World, is ſo great and wonderful, as 'tis ſtrange how this is not the higheſt Intereſt of Mens Life, to have their Faith more deeply confirmed on the ſtrongeſt Trial of their Security now by the Way herein, who muſt ſhortly make ſo great a Trial thereof at Death; for, if we were but once come thus far, as to aſk our own Soul, what the *Chriſtian Faith*, indeed is, that we are thus called to believe, it could not poſſibly but beget ſome Extaſy of wondering at the Greatneſs thereof, and to reckon any Light and implicit Aſſent to the ſame, as a Degree both of *Atheiſm* and Indifferency in this Matter.

V. THOUGH there be no Conflict with *Heathens*, as in the firſt Times, yet was ſuch a Spirit never at a higher Pitch than it is now, to take off all firm Aſſent to the greateſt Principles of Truth, when *Atheiſm* ſeems to be at its laſt Attempt in the World, and we are fallen in ſo amazing an Hour of the Power of Darkneſs, as makes theſe latter Times more

remarkably perilous and trying than the firſt.

VI. YEA, if ſuch a confirming Work be one of the greateſt Means to advance the Repute and Honour of Religion, when its wonted Awe and Veneration is ſo far loſt, and to awake Men to deeper Impreſſions of its Truth, when ſo few ſeem now under any ſuch Weight; then it is certain, there was never more Need of the ſame than in this Day.

POSIT. V. *THAT ſuch a Service to the* Church, *doth not only reſpect the more knowing, inquiſitive and judicious Part thereof, but the meaneſt Profeſſors of Religion alſo, of whom this is neceſſarily required, is evident on theſe Grounds.*

I. BECAUSE each Chriſtian ſhould have undoubtedly ſuch a *Ballaſt* on their own Soul, of the ſolid and rational Grounds of their Faith, as well as thoſe of greater Parts and Endowments: The promoting of which, were it more deeply conſidered, I dare humbly adventure to ſay, would be found one of the choiceſt Means to promote Chriſtianity this Day.

II. BE-

II. BECAUSE this is not to drive any to doubt or queſtion the leaſt ſincere Degree of *Aſſent*, tho' it be not with ſuch Strength of Evidence as in others, nor can by that formal Argumentation give the ſame Account thereof; ſince a few Grounds this Way may ſpecially help to ſome ſolid Conviction, and confirming of their Mind, when they may be ignorant of many other cogent Arguments for this End; but it is certain alſo, the greater Clearneſs of Evidence, doth ſtill in the appointed Way of Means lead in to a more firm and ſtrong Aſſent of the Judgment, to the Truth of our Religion.

III. BECAUSE the Strength of the Foundation in itſelf cannot be enough, if it be not with ſuch a known Evidence, as Men may build firmly and with Aſſurance thereon: Nor hath the LORD thus only deſigned to give his People an infallible and ſure Teſtimony to adventure on, but that it ſhould be made ſure alſo to them.

IV. BECAUSE none can in Truth ſay, that *Jeſus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghoſt*, 1 *Cor.* xxii. 3. by which is not to be underſtood ſo much the Neceſſity of ſupernatural Grace, for a ſaving Faith,

but that none can give a true Assent and Confession of the same, but from these Grounds and Arguments, which are revealed by the Holy Ghost unto Men for this End; and, as 'tis certain, that these *Characters and Evidence of Divinity*, which are imprinted on the whole Revelation of the Gospel, may be clear and demonstrative to our Judgment, so are they as truly Divine, as the Doctrine which is confirmed thereby.

V. BECAUSE there can be no possible Cause for Unbelief of the Truth from any intricate Obscureness of the same, when the LORD hath given such great Assistances to our Faith, to be *as Milk for Babes*, as well *as Meat to strong Men*. And tho' it be objected, that the furthest objective Evidence of the Gospel, with so clear and strong a Conveyance thereof, is yet so little operative on most; the same might be said also of the whole Letter of the Scripture; but, tho' this tends not in the least to resolve our Religion into any meer Exercise of Reason, and leaves the whole Work of the Spirit, in its Energy and Operation therewith on Mens Souls, intire; yet doth it fully evince such a Sufficiency

cy of Evidence with the Christian Faith, as makes any Doubtfulness herein simply impossible, through want of the greatest Advantage of Means; yea, such as are of another Kind than to induce only a *probable Perswasion* of the same.

VI. BECAUSE it is one of the saddest Symptoms of the present State of Religion, that so few almost in whole Congregations, can give any clear Assent to the Truth and Certainty thereof, but to Amazement, both live and die Strangers to the same; yea, how many of these who are otherwise serious in Religion, yet have their *Faith starved* this Way, and are destitute of any such Support, but, as it is not the *Numerousness of Professors*, but the *Strength and Solidity of their Faith*, wherein the Churches Strength most lies, and hath more flourished in a few such to beget a greater Awe and Veneration of Religion amongst Men, than at other Times in the greatest Multitude; so is it the Glory of Divine Truth, that it can subsist by its own proper Evidence, and preserve its Station in the worst of Times, when all external Arguments do most visibly cease.

POSIT. VI. *THAT 'tis fully demonstrable and clear, how no simple instructing of Men, in the* general Principles of Religion, *can be the proper and adequate Means for such a Faith of Assent to the Truth thereof, on its own Evidence, or answer that* Apostolick Pattern of laying the Foundation, *Heb.* vi. 2. *But that some special Duties else are called for to so high an End; such wherein, not only that true primitive Confirmation in the Christian Faith, might have some practical Use, but we might also hope therewith, for a more remarkable out-letting of confirming Influences of the Spirit of God.*

WHAT is to be understood herein, I shall humbly offer in a few Particulars

I. THAT it is one of the greatest Concerns of the *Ministerial Work*, and of the *Key of Doctrine*, to have all who hear the Gospel, in the *first* Place, pressed to take Religion so far to Heart, as to make a serious Enquiry into the Grounds and Reasons hereof, and thus to know their being on sure Ground herein, not because they know not another

ther Way, but becauſe they know this is the alone Way of Truth, to which they dare truſt their Immortal Souls. 2. That for this End the ſupream Truths of Religion be repreſented with that Certainty of Evidence, and Demonſtration, as both ſuch great and marvellous Things do require, and the Temper of ſuch a gain-ſaying Age now calls for; and to have this preſſed more on Mens Judgment and Conſcience, that the *Things of God*, which are of the *higheſt Conſequence*, *Reality and Subſtance*, can have no poſſible Reception by any implicite or probable Belief thereof, nor can admit any Pretence for the ſame, when the LORD hath given ſuch Kind of Proofs and Evidence, as leaves Mens Darkneſs herein, without any Shadow of Excuſe.

II. THAT it peculiarly belongs to the *Catechetical Work of Religion*, to take ſome Account of the meaneſt Profeſſors thereof, and with a ſpecial Reſpect to the *Youth*; of their *Faith of Aſſent* to the Doctrine of CHRIST, on what Grounds and Certainty of Evidence this is founded, and for their inſtructing therein, as well as in the general Principles of Religion;

gion; when one of the moſt ruining Things to the Church lies here, that the Profeſſion of moſt is laid in ſo deep an Ignorance, as they have almoſt nothing to ſay for the ſame, but a naked Affirmation. I know the Difficulty hereof, for the Weak may be objected, but without juſt Cauſe; ſince as the Prime Truths of Religion are few, eaſy and plain for the meaneſt Capacity, ſo alſo are the primary Evidences and Demonſtrations of our Faith, if ſuch once with that Deſire did ſearch after the ſame, as for a hidden and invaluable Treaſure; wherein this Reſpect ſhould be ſtill had to difference betwixt what is Initial and of a more fundamental Concern for the Weak, and what may tend to an higher Growth and Increaſe of others.

III. It ſhould be of greateſt Uſe and Advantage alſo for the ſame End, that the *young Growth* now coming up in the Church, were put to give ſome *explicit Evidence* of their Conſent and Choice of the Profeſſion of Christ, ſo far as may witneſs a Ratification of the *Baptiſmal Covenant*, now as their own proper Deed, wherein they were implicitely engaged in their Infancy. Some ſpecial Grounds

Grounds and Reasons for this, are, 1. Because GOD will have his Service freely entred in and upon Choice, as that Way which is most agreeable to his Honour; for, as the *Covenant* binds mutually, so do the *Seals* thereof also, and therefore upon our Part is *Baptism a Sacramental Oath of Allegiance to God.* 2. Because it tends to a more resolute and firm Adherence to the Service of GOD, that this Business should be personally brought Home to Mens Conscience, especially before their first Admittance to the Sacrament of the LORD's Supper, and thus to engage them as *Joshua* did, *Chap.* xxiv. 22. *Ye are Witnesses against yourselves herein, and they said, we are Witnesses.* 3. Because this is expresly held forth, 1 *Pet.* iii. 21. where *Baptism is called the Answer of a good Conscience toward God,* upon this Ground, that such then who were come to Yearsof Knowledge, were personally brought to confirm by their own Consent that solemn Engagement and Dedication by Baptism to be the LORD's, and therefore it is called ἐπερώτημα, which is *vox juris*, and, signifies, *Sponsio, & stipulatio publica inter Christianum, & Dominum Christum,*

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as the moſt judicious Commentators on that Scripture do clearly render it; and ſo this was a ſpecial Part of the primitive Practice, not only with reſpect to ſuch, who were converted from *Heatheniſm*, but were born within the Church, and Partakers of that *Seal of Baptiſm in their Infancy*, to bring them to anſwer to that great Demand of the Covenant, Do you now Conſent upon *Evidence and Choice*, to be the LORD's, and to be a Subject of his Kingdom, and embrace the Laws thereof, and do you thus in Sincerity and Truth, declare the ſame, wherein you have a good Conſcience before GOD? And of what bleſſed Fruit and Advantage ſhould this be both for the Increaſe and Honour of the Goſpel, if this were more deeply taken to Heart for ſome practical Uſe, according to the *Rule*, and *primitive Pattern* in the Churches of CHRIST!

IV. IT were ſpecially deſireable alſo, that there be ſome *clear View and Summary* by itſelf, of the moſt *cogent Grounds and Demonſtrations of the Chriſtian Faith*, with reſpect both to the *doctrinal*, *hiſtorical*, and *prophetical* Part thereof, and in that Manner accommodated, as the meaneſt

meaneſt within the Church might have ſuch a Help ſtill at their Hand, and thus with the leaſt Expence of Time, be provided of ſuch Arguments and Reaſons, as ſhould tend (through the Bleſſing of GOD) not only to the furtheſt rational Aſſent, and Certainty of the Truth of their Profeſſion, but to give a moſt ſpecial Support of Mind againſt that inward Trial of Satan's Temptations and fiery Darts this Way; yea, is ſuch a Mean, that in the ſerious Improvement hereof, by having ſuch Evidences once brought in on Mens Judgment and Conſcience, ſo as to ſee with their own Eyes the Truth of the ſame, I muſt humbly judge, there is nothing, next to the internal Work of the Spirit, of this Kind, might tend more to promote the Kingdom of CHRIST in this Day.

POSIT. VII. *THAT as there are ſome more* ſignal Periods of Time, *to which a greater Brightneſs and Increaſe of Light hath Reſpect under the* New Teſtament; *ſo doth there now ſeem to be ſome remarkable Call and Excitement, to ſuch a* confirming Work, *in this Day about the Chriſtian Faith; when we may hope, that a more*

a more ſolemn and reſtoring Time of Religion *in the World, is on a near Approach, (tho' all ſenſible Evidence would ſeem to controul this,) and may be now more looked after, and prepared for, under a ſuitable Impreſſion of theſe* Grounds *for the ſame.*

I. THAT the promiſed Time of the *Converſion of the Jews* doth aſſuredly draw near; and whatever be judged by ſome of the LORD's immediate Appearance herein by a *Miracle*, yet it is unqueſtionable that nothing in the Way of Means, could be more promiſing and hopeful to promote this great End, than by promoting ſo great a Service as this for the Chriſtian Church.

II. THAT a greater Extent alſo of the Profeſſion of CHRIST amongſt the *Gentiles*, and rending of the Vail that is now over many dark Nations, ſeemeth clearly inſured therewith; and what a hopeful Evidence ſhould this be if ſuch a *Publick and Catholick Spirit* were more ſeen, how to advance the higheſt Ends of Religion on ſuch an Account without Reſpect to any partial or divided Intereſt? Yea, that this bleſt Zeal of GOD, might

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in that Manner appear to have the dark World, get a more clear and convincing Prospect of the *highest rational Demonstrations of Christianity*, as might through the Lord's gracious Concurrence bring Men once to an inquisitive and serious Spirit about the same. Oh! that such may be raised up in this dismal Hour, with something the ancient Spirit, to travel with Desire for the Salvation of Mankind, and of whom it may be said, as of blest *Nehemiah*, *those are indeed come to seek the Welfare of their People*, in their greatest Interest.

III. And this further Excitement we are now under for this End, in a Time when Popery seems to be upon one of its last and greatest Assaults against the Church; since 'tis so clear, that whatever tends to confirm Men in Christianity, from their own Trial and Enquiry upon the confirming Evidences thereof, must have the same native Result to make such confirmed Protestants; yea, nothing is more demonstrable than that the Method and Grounds that are taken, both to engage and fix Men in the Popish Profession, have the same rational Tendency to promote Atheism, and

to give Infidels the greateſt Advantage to reject the Profeſſion of CHRIST. *He that hath Ears to hear, let him hear.* AMEN.

CHAP. II.

The confirming Work of Religion, reduced to pratical Uſe; in ſome clear View of thoſe preliminary Grounds, and Demonſtrations of our Faith, which none ſhould pretend Ignorance of, who enter the Profeſſion of Chriſt upon Choice, and Certainty of Evidence.

SECTION I.

QU. I. *WHAT* Reaſons, *and* Demonſtrations, *can you give for ſo great a Faith, as that of the* glorious Being of GOD; *who is inviſible to human Senſe; ſince this is the Foundation of all Religion?*

Anſw. THO' this is principally founded on the Sacred Truth and Authority of his own Word, yet I am with the furtheſt infallible Evidence confirmed herein.

I. THAT

I. THAT it can be no more ſure, that this marvellous Frame of the Heavens and Earth hath a Being, and is the Object of our Senſe, than that a ſupream infinite Wiſdom and Power muſt be the firſt Cauſe hereof, and it were ſimply impoſſible it could ever otherwiſe have been.

II. THAT he hath thus made himſelf viſible to our Eyes, by ſuch a viſible World, and in ſo exquiſite an Order and Correſpondence to ſupport the ſame, as nothing ſtands alone by itſelf, but in a Line of mutual Reſpect, which runs through the whole Creation. We may as clearly thus ſee, that God is, as that there is an inviſible Soul in a living Body.

III. THAT this Harmony is amongſt Things, in their own Nature ſo contrary and deſtructive to other, for to hold this wonderful Frame, as all muſt abandon Reaſon, or ſee an infinitely wiſe Conduct herein; and no need of extraordinary Miracles, to confirm what the whole Conſtitutions of Nature do Witneſs.

IV. THAT this rare Frame of Man could never have come in Being, but by him who could unite ſuch different Subſtances as a Material Body, and an

Immaterial Soul, in ſo near and marvellous an Union.

V. THAT there is ſuch an univerſal Conſent of Mankind in all Ages thereto, as ſhews Religion to be founded in the very Nature of Man, and as eſſential to his Being, as his Reaſon is, yea, that the ultimate Difference of Man from the Beaſt, and moſt eſſential Property of human Nature lies here.

VI. THAT tho' every one be an Enemy to what torments him; yet it was never poſſible for an Atheiſt to free himſelf from that unavoidable Senſe and Fear of a Deity; nor, in a World ſo much loſt in Wickedneſs, could he ever extinguiſh the Awe of Religion, or make any rational Oppoſition to this greateſt Article of the common Faith of Mankind.

VII. THAT the Reaſon of the whole Conſtitution of Nature, and Viciſſitude of Things here, is ſo great, as, without ſhutting out the Uſe of Reaſon, we cannot but ſee, how nothing poſſibly could have been better; and that any want hereof in the whole Frame of the Univerſe, would be as the Diſlocation of a joint of the Body, and were not conceivable

vable to be otherwise than it is by infinite Wisdom appointed.

VIII. That 'tis simply impossible, that GOD blessed for ever should not exist, or that this Universe, (which is a Work so highly becoming the Greatness of its Maker,) could possibly subsist for one Hour or Minute of Time without a supream Independent Power and Being, on which all visible Beings have their Dependence, since they cannot depend upon nothing.

IX. That such is the absolute Necessity of the *Faith also of a Godhead*, as without this the State of Mankind could not morally subsist, or any possible Order, Subjection, Piety, and Justice, be to support human Society, but as *Bradwardine* saith, *O quam necesse est hunc esse, quem impossibile est non esse.*

X. How plain is it, that Men cannot but see these Effects of his Power on the Conscience, in the Certainty of a prophetic Light and Discovery, as hath been oft given of future Things, and in the undeniable Truth of Miracles, so as such a *Prodigy*, as a profest *Atheist*, can have no Claim to human Race, as a rational Being, more than the greatest *Monster* in Nature to be a true Man.

Qu. II. *What doth witneſs the* World's *not being* Eternal, *and its firſt Original and Beginning from God, to confirm our Faith herein, by rational Demonſtration?*

Anſw. I. THAT Eternity is an incommunicable Perfection of the firſt Cauſe, and that which is made up of corruptible and periſhing Things, as this viſible World cannot poſſibly be in itſelf eternal; nor could ever produce itſelf, ſince thus it muſt both be and not be at the ſame Time, which is the greateſt Contradiction.

II. THAT if there be ſuch a Thing now as Time, there can be no judging of Days, Years and Ages to be infinite, or how one Thing in a continued Order, ſhould thus go before another, without coming to ſome firſt Beginning.

III. IF there be a gradual Increaſe of human Learning on the Earth, and a further Diſcovery of Arts and Sciences; and the greateſt Experiments and Inventions have been but of a late Riſe and Date; then can there not poſſibly be an eternal Suc-

Succeſſion of Mankind, with a continued Progreſs and Experience this Way; nor can it be, that but of late, one Part of the World is known and diſcovered to another.

IV. THAT ſo ſhort an Hiſtory as we have in the moſt ancient Records of Time, were wholly inconſiſtent with ſuch an eternal Duration, or that infinite Ages preceding, ſhould leave no Remembrance to Poſterity, when ſo ſmall a Meaſure of Time, as a few thouſand Years, have left ſo much.

V. NOR could Men beget Men eternally, without going back to ſome firſt Man, who could not beget himſelf.

VI. THAT if Eternity be preferable to Time, then ſhould not the excelleneſt Being in the Earth, Man, be thus corruptible, and only this inanimate Maſs of the Earth eternal.

VII. THAT infinite Ages paſt, tho' they ſhould have but multiplied the Race of Man in an Age, to two or three more, ſhould have come to that at laſt, that the whole Precinct of the Earth could not poſſibly bear the Product of ſuch an infinite Increaſe; and no Wars or extraordinary Judgments were ever yet known

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to be such, as to restrain such an unavoidable Growth.

Quest. III. *What infallible Evidence to Reason is there of a* Supream Providence, *both in the* Conservation, and Government of the World; *for confirming our Faith in the Scripture herein?*

Answ. I. THAT it is clear the Support of this great Frame of the Universe, with that continued and regular Course of Nature herein, is as simply impossible without an infinite divine Power, as its first Being and Creation.

II. THAT such an Extent of Providence as respects so innumerable Objects, with such a Contrariety, both of Qualities and Passions in the same, must needs be from an infinite and intelligent Cause.

III. THAT all Things to this Day, continue in that established Order of second Causes, wherein GOD hath placed them by a Law so visibly imprinted on the Nature of Things without Reason, that they do as exactly answer the same, in their proper Course and Station, as if they

they had a rational Knowledge of their Duty.

IV. THAT universal Respect, the *Sun in the Firmament*, hath to Things here below, tho' at so great a Distance, which doth neither cease, or grow weary to send forth its Beams and hidden Influences to the meanest Creatures, may let us clearly see, how it hath the same visible Use and End to confirm an incomprehensible and infinite Providence about the meanest Things, as well as the greatest.

V. THAT immediate Precedency of the Soul in that lesser World of Man, bears the same Evidence therewith; which tho' we never saw with our Eyes, yet doth undeniably actuate the whole Body in its Functions, as the proper Spring of every Act and Motion there.

VI. IT is thus further confirmed, by these continued Vicissitudes and Turns of Summer and Winter, and of Day and Night, that Man might have, both Light for his Labour, and Darkness as a Covering for his Rest.

VII. By such visible Discoveries of divine Judgment, and Execution of his Laws on Men here, as all may see his Hand

Hand therein, who yet will not hear his Voice in the Word.

VIII. By these extraordinary and wonderful Works of Providence, which have been in all Ages.

IX. By so evident a Restraint, both over Devils, and wicked Men, without which, they would quickly disturb the whole Frame of this Earth, and make it uninhabitable for human Society; if their being thus bounded and chained, were not as visible, as the Certainty of their Being.

X. By such a natural Obligation to moral Duties, with the Sense of a Difference betwixt Good and Evil, as is founded in the very rational Nature of Man, that none can possibly root out, even where the Scripture is not known.

XI. By that natural Confidence also in GOD, which all Men have, and Recourse to him on any present extream Hazard, to witness not only that the most High bears Rule in the Kingdoms of Men, but that the Sense and Evidence hereof is unavoidable.

Quest. IV. *But doth this great* Administration of Providence, *about human Affairs,*

Affairs, as unchangeably appear, in a differencing *betwixt the Righteous and the Wicked, by some Recompence to the one, and Punishment to the other, as in the established Course of Nature?*

Answ. It is certain, that such as desire a confirming of their Faith herein, want it not, with the furthest Evidence, but may ever see that exact Conformity in the whole Dispensation of Providence, to the Rectitude and Perfection of the divine Nature, and how a firm Belief, *that God is*, and *that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him*, is one and the same Faith; when we cannot but see,

I. That natural Sense of Good and Evil, and essential Difference betwixt the same, which is so firmly founded in the Reason of all Mankind, as no human Laws or Custom could ever take this off their Conscience, or make an Indifference herein, without extinguishing the very Nature of Man; to shew, that eternal and unchangeable Difference, which the holy Nature of GOD hath put betwixt them.

II. That

II. THAT we see the worst of Men so constrained to an awful Sense and Regard of Truth and Well-doing; and to acknowledge the Loveliness and Excellency hereof, as does make them seek their own own Repute, by a false Shew and Counterfeit of the same; and gives such a Being and Rise to that dreadful Imposture of Hypocrisy.

III. THAT 'tis the Truth's Privilege ever to outlive Falshood, and prevail over the same, yea, to have the greater Triumph after its sorest Conflicts; and how this is of as fundamental a Constitution, in the Course of Providence, as the most firm Establishment of Nature.

IV. THAT, in no Time since Man was formed in the Earth, doth true Joy and Serenity of Mind, cease to be the native Result of Well-doing, or the Fruit of Righteousness to be Peace and Assurance of Mind, nor hath it ever wanted a Witness, even before any Word given of the Lord's taking Pleasure herein.

V. THAT 'tis so evident, in the most dismal Times, what a public Blessing such are, who by more extraordinary Trials, have been put to the highest Exercise of their Grace and Patience; yea, how

how visibly such have been promoted to the most honourable Service for GOD, and to advance the Credit of Religion before Men, who on the first Sight and View, have been accounted the most miserable of any.

VI. WHILST, on the other Hand, it may be ever seen, how with the greatest Prosperity of the Wicked here, there are Punishments of another Kind dispensed, and more dreadful than any outward Affliction, such, as judicial Obstinacy, and Blindness of Mind in opposition to GOD, even when their own Ruin is made visible to them herein.

VII. How oft Men are thus evidently condemned to be happy in this World, by some strange Measure of temporal Success and Prosperity, before some great Fall and Ruin, as the Issue hereof in the last Scene of Providence, doth fully attest.

VIII. THAT 'tis seen also, how Sin doth ever bring its own Punishment with it, in some begun Degree both of Shame and Torment; and, as *Seneca*, an Heathen, could say, *That Wickedness was the most exquisite Contriver of human Misery*, so the World likewise may

ſee how a preſent Immunity from Judgment is no Releaſe, but when its Sentence is not ſpeedily executed, yet is it at laſt ſurely executed.

IX. AND how evident is it, that the greateſt Haters of Godlineſs are yet inforced to juſtify the ſame, and the Chriſtian's Choice herein, as the greateſt Wiſdom, upon any ſurprizing State and Extremity; yea, how ſuch would be glad to join Intereſts then with ſuch in their Death, whom they moſt contemned in their Life.

Queſt. V. *How is it convincing and demonſtrable, that God hath given any clear and expreſs Revelation of his Will and Council unto Men, and that ſuch a* wonderful Record *is undoubtedly extant in the World?*

Anſw. THAT, I. It is not poſſible to believe the *Being of God*, and not alſo the Truth of an eſtabliſhed *Law*, and Rule of Commerce betwixt him and Man here, ſo as to know both what we ſhould do, and what we ſhould expect and hope from him.

II. THAT this alſo muſt be known and diſplay its Power and Efficacy to the World

World, in that Manner, and by such infallible Evidence of its Truth, as may render all inexcusable, who give not intire Credit thereto.

III. I can be no more clear and assured, that there is but one Sun in the Firmament, than that there is but one Fountain, and Repository of sacred Light about Religion, which is the Scripture, and its being the alone public Standard of Truth to the whole World.

IV. That no Way was ever made known to recover Mankind from a State of Bondage, Darkness, and Misery, consistent with the very Use of Reason, but by this blessed Light which shineth there.

V. Yea, that there is as visible a Difference, betwixt the same and any pretended Religion which ever was besides in the World, as there is betwixt Day and Night, which is founded in the immutable Nature of these Things in themselves.

VI. That there is one proper Sphere, where this glorious Light of divine Truth is fixed, and wherein it shines forth from one Age to another; which is the Christian Church.

Queſt. VI. *But what more peculiar Evidences can you ſhew of the* Divinity of the Scriptures, *that all may ſee them to be of infallible Truth?*

Anſw. I. THAT 'tis ſure ſuch a Book is this Day in the Earth, which no created Wiſdom could ever have made, and contain ſuch Things of higheſt Concern to Mankind, as does infinitely exceed the Bounds of human Ability and Invention, and could never have been diſcovered but by GOD himſelf.

II. THAT it gives forth ſuch exquiſite Laws and Conſtitutions of our Religion, as Men muſt needs ſee the holy Nature, Purity, and Perfection of GOD, moſt brightly ſhining forth therein.

III. WHICH doth diſcover ſo great and proper a Relief for all thoſe Evils and Miſeries that do attend this fallen Eſtate of Man, as none but an All-ſufficient GOD could work.

IV. THAT he alone muſt be the Author of this bleſſed Record, who rules the World, and hath determined the Changes and Revolutions thereof, when it is not more evident that theſe viſible Heavens are ſtretched forth over the Earth,

Earth, than that this Line of the Scripture is ſtretched over the whole Work and Frame of Providence, and doth moſt clearly and brightly illuminate the ſame.

V. THAT, ſurely this was the Product of infinite Wiſdom, that ſo great a Variety of Matter ſhould meet with ſo viſible a Conſent and Harmony in one perfect and entire Frame; yea, knit in ſo cloſe a Bond of Union together, as makes the whole Bible to be entirely one Piece; tho' in the writing of each diſtinct Part thereof, it could never have poſſibly been contrived or foreſeen by human Wiſdom, as we ſee here, of ſo admirable an Agreement and Correſpondence, as is in all the Parts thereof.

VI. THAT none elſe could have ſpoke the World, in ſo majeſtic a Way, and ſo becoming the Greatneſs and Sovereignty of GOD, to aſſume ſuch a Supremacy, and give forth Laws for abſolute Obedience from all Mankind thereto, and on ſuch a Penalty of eternal Deſtruction; or that any Impoſtors, either poſſibly could or durſt have, in ſuch a Manner perſonated the ſame.

VII. THAT it muſt needs be his Word, who perfectly knows what is in

Man, and hath an absolute Authority over the Soul, and is a Discerner of the Thoughts thereof, who, thus not only gives Law to the Conscience, and our inward Parts, but doth establish an internal Religion there, no less absolutely, than what respects our external Work and Actions.

VIII. YEA, where all may see the Penmen thereof, under so intire a Subjection to the Doctrine which they taught, and that it is no Contrivance of their own, as they did record their own Failings and Imperfections in Behalf of the Truth; and did thus also require all just Respect and Obedience to Magistrates, when thro' the whole Earth they were then greatest Enemies to the Truth of the Gospel.

IX. THAT this must be his Word, who alone can derive Principles of Life to his own Institutions, and animate the same with a quickening Spirit; and is a Work above the Contrivance of Angels or Men, when directed to each new Trial of the Church, and personal Case of Christians, as tho' it had been alone written for that Time; so that I can be no more perswaded in Reason that there

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is such a Book as the Bible in the Earth, than that it came from Heaven, and is the alone Rule of Religion, and of divine Revelation, for the governing of Mankind.

Quest. VII. *How is the secure* Conveyance of the Scripture *demonstrable amidst all the Changes of Times past, and that there could be no possible Tendency to its Corruption?*

Answ. I. THAT 'tis so undeniably the first Rule, which ever was given to Mankind about Religion, and the alone public Standard of Truth, that hath endured the Trial and Inquiry of all Times past, so as no Pretences in the Matter of Antiquity could yet ever be to the contrary.

II. THAT there is so exact an Harmony betwixt the Old and New Testament, as the one is a visible Transcript of the other, in its Accomplishment; that I can be no more sure of such a venerable Record as the Old Testament, and its unalterable Conveyance to the Church, to which the whole Race of the *Jews* is yet a standing Witness, than how it is

conti-

continued and perfected in the Revelation of the Gospel, and but one entire Frame.

III. THAT its Deliverance was by no private Deed, but by a public Trust to the whole universal Church; so as it were more easy in the way of Reason, to question the most fundamental Statutes and Laws of any Nation, by which Mens private Right and Property is secured, than the Truth hereof.

IV. THAT, under the Gospel, it hath been so fully dispersed over the World, and in such various Languages; that an innumerable Company of Christians these 1600 Years past, have been as common living Books of the same.

V. THAT those numerous Versions and Commentaries written thereon in in diverse Languages, do fully evidence they had the same Scripture, and no other than what we have this Day.

VI. THAT this was delivered to the Church, not only in Writing, but in that Form of sound Words, for keeping close thereto, as could admit of no possible Tendency to corrupt or alter the same; besides the continued and public Reference that hath been since the first Ages

of

of the Gospel to its Decision, which all these sharp Controversies, that have been in the Church on all Sides, do inevitably require.

Quest. VIII. *What doth confirm the Fall of Man, and entry of Sin into the World this Way, from clear and unavoidable Evidences of Reason?*

Answ. I. THAT there is such a Thing as Sin and Evil in the World, with the Sense and Conscience of Guilt arising hereon amongst all Mankind, can need no Proof nor Evidence.

II. THAT it is simply impossible this should have been originally created with Man, or essentially belonging to his first Frame and Constitution, since then there could be no Conscience of Guilt or Remorse, for what was given to be a Part of himself in his first Frame; nor could it be any Sin, to act thus suitably to their own original State.

III. THAT it were not conceivable also, how one Part of Man should be in such Opposition to another.

IV. NOR that such a Thing as inherent Shame could be in the Nature of Man

Man upon the Senſe of Guilt, and by ſo natural a Reſult follow the ſame, or that ſuch ſhould be aſhamed of any Part of his own Being, if this were not upon an undoubted Apoſtacy, from what once he was, and that inevitable Conviction of Conſcience, that he now is what he ought not to be, ſo as the Certainty of Man's Fall, tho' alone revealed in the Scripture, as to the true Cauſe thereof, yet may be as evident to Reaſon, as the Truth of his Being now is.

SECTION II.

QUESTION I.

ARE there ſuch Aſſiſtances *to the Chriſtian Faith, upon that great and aſtoniſhing Myſtery of the Revelation of Chriſt to the World, as can fully anſwer the Greatneſs thereof from clear and infallible Evidence to Mens Judgments?*

Anſw. IT is ſure, there could nothing poſſibly be deſired more to ſatisfy the moſt doubtful and ſuſpicious Mind, than is given for the furtheſt Certainty hereof.

I. THAT

I. THAT such a glorious Person as the *Messiah* was to come, and be anointed to that great Work of redeeming Mankind from Sin and Misery, and bring Man back again unto GOD; and that this Promise is the alone Foundation, whereon the Church was founded since Man fell.

II. THAT all the numerous Types and Sacrifices under the Law, did so expresly tend to confirm their Faith of that one blessed propitiatory Sacrifice which was to be offered up.

III. That long ere the New Testament was written, there was so clear and exact a Portraicture of the *Messias* drawn forth in the Old, with such peculiar Marks, whereby he should be known to the Church, and infallibly take Place in the Event, as Men could not upon any Scripture Evidence expect his coming in another Way.

IV. That his Humiliation and Sufferings were so expresly held forth and foretold, with the peculiar Circumstances thereof, in the liii. Chapter of *Isaiah*, and ix. of *Daniel*, as if they had been Eye-witnesses of the Accomplishment thereof.

V. That,

V. That, even the ſpecial Seaſon and Period of Time for accompliſhing this great Promiſe was ſo far made known, as upon diligent Search and Enquiry, its near Approach might be diſcernable and clear to what, or what Manner of Time this did ſpecially relate; for, which both the Fall of the Monarchies, and *Daniel*'s ſeventy Weeks, were ſet up as High-way Marks to guide Mens Faith herein.

VI. That 'tis ſimply impoſſible, according to the Scripture, how the promiſed *Meſſias* could be yet to come, except the *Jews* were put in the ſame State they were in at his coming, when now for theſe 1600 Years there hath been no Sceptre, nor Law-giver, no Temple, or daily Sacrifice.

VII. That this great Myſtery could never poſſibly have entred in our Thoughts, or be deviſed by any created Underſtanding.

Queſt. II. *But are there as clear and infallible Evidences of the Truth of this great Promiſe in the Event, that ſurely the bleſſed* Meſſias *of the World is now come, as that it is ſure he was promiſed?*

Anſw.

Anſw. 'Tis beyond all poſſible Debate,

I. That ſo divine and wonderful a Perſon, was in the Days of *Tiberius Cæſar*, manifeſted to *Iſrael*, with no outward Shew or Obſervation, who did ſo great and marvellous Things, before all the People, as were above all created Power, yea, that he was crucified at *Jeruſalem*, under *Pontius Pilate*, is a Truth in the Matter of Fact, that both *Jews* and *Heathens* have been enforced to confeſs it.

II. That this ſpecial Seaſon of his coming into the World, is the great Epocha, and Period of Time, from which the *Chriſtian Church* hath ever ſince to this Day, reckoned her State and Succeſſion, is undoubted and clear alſo.

III. That the Time of his Appearance unto the World, did ſo exactly ſuit that which was foretold by the *Prophets*, that the *Jewiſh Church* was at that Time with greateſt Intentneſs looking after the *Meſſias;* ſo as ſome remarkable Impoſtors took Occaſion from hence to deceive the People herein.

IV. That, in him, who was then revealed, and whom the Christian Church worships, 'tis sure, was most exactly fulfilled, whatever was foretold, concerning the *Messias* in the Old Testament; and we do appeal herein to these Records, which all the *Jews* even to this Day do acknowledge to be divine.

V. That this was not done in a Corner, but in the public View of Men in those Days, most known to all and famous, yea, by the special Appointment of GOD, at so solemn a Time of the Passover in *Jerusalem*, where Christ our Passover was then sacrificed.

VI. That no human Interest or Policy could possibly be in this Discovery of the Gospel; when nothing could have been more visibly cross thereto, or obstructive of its Success, than such a publishing of the Death and Sufferings of our Lord, with all the Ignominy and Abasement which attended the same, had there been any way here to consult carnal Reason, or any other Ground to bear it out than the Evidence and Certainty of its Truth.

VII. That, herein have all divided Parties and Sects, in the Christian World been enforced still to meet and consent,

in

in an Acknowledgement of the Substance thereof.

VIII. That in the same Light which was held forth in the Old Testament about the *Messias*, did the whole *Gentile* Church enter; and made Claim to their Right for being adopted the Seed and Children of *Abraham*, on these clear and expres's Promises given for the same; which the *Jews* could not but confess to be of divine Authority.

Quest. III. *What Confirmation is it to the Christian Faith, that the coming of the* Messias *should be deferred for Four thousand Years after the Promise?*

Answ. Tho' the sovereign Pleasure of God should silence and satisfy our Mind herein; yet is there such a Sight to be had hereof, and of infinite divine Wisdom shining forth in the same, as should be most confirming for these Ends.

I. That there might be a more distinct representing the Glory of this Mystery to Angels and Men, in such a gradual opening up of the same.

II. To put that Weight and high Value on his own Promise and Testimony

herein, when on the alone Credit thereof, he would thus both try, and bear out the Faith of his Church, for ſo many Ages, and draw forth their Deſires and Longings in all that long Space of Time after the ſame.

III. To teſtify the Greatneſs of his Wrath againſt Sin, and the Apoſtacy of Mankind, by ſuffering the Generality thereof to lie ſo long under its fatal Effects.

IV. To prepare the Church for ſo great a Reception, by all that long preparatory Service of legal Inſtitutions, it highly becoming the Greatneſs of this Myſtery, to have ſo ſolemn and wondrous an Introduction thereto.

V. That thus the World might have its full Trial of the Inſufficiency of natural Abilities, and of any Improvements of human Wiſdom and Learning, for Help; after this had firſt been at the furtheſt Height, both in *Greece* and *Rome*, before the alone Redeemer of the Church came.

Queſt. IV. *What can offer furtheſt Conviction to the World, of the Truth of Chriſtianity, from its Nature and internal Excel-*

Excellencies; and that it is no leſs eſſentially Good in itſelf, than evidently true?

Anſw. I. It is undeniable even to thoſe that live at a Diſtance, that ſuch is the Truth of Chriſt, that tho' all viſible and human Props ſhould fail, it can ſubſiſt by its own Evidence, and Authority over Mens Conſciences; and hath thus ever preſerved its Station in the worſt of Times.

II. That, as it holds forth the moſt exquiſite Rule of Perfection to follow, ſo doth it bring the greateſt Relief to the Diſtempers of the Mind, and thoſe Miſeries which attend the human State here; ſo that a higher Glory doth thus reſult to the holy GOD, by this Diſpenſation of Grace to fallen Man, than if he had ſtood in his Primitive State.

III. That it is ſure the Truth and Doctrine of Chriſt, doth natively tend to fix Men in a State of Light and Communion with GOD, and in a State of Separation in their Principles, Affection, and Converſation from the World.

IV. That it doth more brightly ſhine forth in Simplicity, and Truth, and in

its internal and vital Acts, than in any outward Form or Show: Yea, in the Way of Self-denial, Meekneſs, and Poverty of Spirit, doth ſuch an Excellency appear, as in its own Nature, hath as viſible a Difference from the proud and vindictive Spirit of this World, as the Day hath from the Night.

V. That ſuch Chriſtianity can be known, by no naked doctrinal Diſcovery of the ſame to Mens Judgment, or ſuch Rules as any human Science is acquired by, without an inward Power, and Principles of a new Life; nor can there ever be a right Knowledge of Divinity, until it be firſt ingrafted in a divine Heart. So far is this Myſtery above all human Rule and Contrivance.

VI. That it is ſtated in the greateſt Oppoſition to any falſe Show of Hypocriſy; yea, brings ſuch Inforcements therewith of Candor, and Truth, and of Love, Tenderneſs and Sympathy towards others, as all muſt ſee, is not only the higheſt Ornament and Perfection of our Nature, but the greateſt Bleſſing to the World that ever was known.

VII. That ſuch a native Luſtre and Fragrancy doth attend the Truth, and Simpli-

Simplicity of the Gospel, as makes it no more possible for human Art or Cunning to represent this, than to make the dead Image of a Man to live, or to paint on a Board the vital Scent of a Violet or Rose to our Senses.

VIII. That, in this Way of the Gospel's subduing Men to the Obedience thereof, by the Power of inward Grace, the Glory of Christ doth more eminently shine forth, than if he had appeared for this End with the greatest outward Majesty, and Attendance of Angels to our bodily Eyes.

IX. That it is visible, that the whole World besides, that is without the Revelation of Christ, is a Place, where Horror, Falshood, and Impiety do manifestly reign.

Quest. V. *But, how do you receive so wonderful a Truth, as that of the Gospel is, when 'tis now so great a Distance of Time from its first Promulgation?*

Answ. I. That we can be more sure and persuaded of the most visible and present Objects of Sense, than, that this is the same Gospel which is still shining

ſhining forth to the World, whereby an innumerable Company of all Nations, Tongues and Languages, have received the Spirit, and been ſealed; yea, it hath made that Change upon Men, in turning them from Ungodlineſs and Idols, to ſerve the living GOD, as hath been no leſs marvellous than the turning of ſo many Wolves into Lambs.

II. That it is the ſame Goſpel, which not only through a Series of 1600 Years hath been atteſted, but by ſuch innumerable Witneſſes, who counted not their Life dear unto the Death for ſealing thereof, and found it ſweet to be offered up in the Flames for Chriſt.

III. Which, in all Ages paſt, hath ſtood out the greateſt Oppoſition that ever the World made to any Intereſt, while the Weapons of its Warfare were ſpiritual, and not carnal; and with that Succeſs, that made the Time of the Churches hotteſt Perſecution from Heathens, the Time alſo of its moſt remarkable ſpreading in the World.

IV. That the ſame Goſpel is revealed this Day, which hath had ſuch diſcernable Triumphs and Succeſs, when no external Aſſiſtance could be had for it; and there

there was no visible Power, by which it gained the most savage and dark Parts of the Earth to take on the Yoak of Christ, and prefer the Objects of Faith to the most desireable Objects of Sense.

V. Yea, the Gospel hath not only had such vital Influence on Mens Hearts and Practice, to change it into the same Image; but that herein the Doctrine of the Cross of Christ, in the greatest Simplicity, hath still been the most effectual Way of its Conquest, and the greatest Attractive on Mens Souls to receive the same.

Quest. VI. *How is it demonstrable, that such remarkable Sufferings of Times past for the Truth of Christ, were both founded on the alone Certainty thereof, and carried out by a divine Spirit above any Assistance of Nature?*

Answ. That it is sure, I. Here was no Comedy, Play, or personated Sufferings which the Primitive Christians, then, and in after Times, did endure for Christ; or, that these unexpressible Torments and Pains were any Dream, and Delusion, either to themselves, or the World,

World, and that their Adversaries did thus conflict and wrestle with their own Shadow, in so continued and cruel an Opposition.

II. That the Joy and Exultation of Spirit, these Witnesses had amidst their Torments, (who otherwise wanted no Sense or Feeling of their Pains and Sufferings,) could have no Rise but what was supernatural.

III. That this could be no possible Dissimulation, or Counterfeit, when they were stepping into Eternity, nor the Product of a distempered Judgment; whilst all might see what Seriousness of Spirit, Tenderness, and Bowels of Compassion to their Adversaries they did then evidence.

IV. That those greatest Sufferings were upon Choice, and Christians hastened to endure them, rather than to be safe at the Rate of receding and departing in any thing from the Truth.

V. Yea, no natural Reason, can comprehend how such mean and feeble Persons, as many of these were, should endure, what would have made the greatest natural Courage to faint, as if they had foregone all human Passions, which Flesh

Flesh and Blood must needs have herein; so that I am constrained to see something no less marvellous and supernatural in the Faith of Martyrs, than in the Faith of Miracles.

SECTION III.

QUESTION. I.

IS it fully demonstrable, that the Faith of a Deity, *and of such an Establishment, as a religious Worship, must necessarily determine Men, and constrain them to be* Christians, *on this Ground, that they cannot but see how* Religion *hath not another Being in the Earth, but in the Truth of* Christianity *?*

Answ. It is simply impossible to make a rational Trial herein, and not see the Certainty of this Demonstration, to be thus clear.

I. That there needs no more for any of a serious Spirit, but to come and see, what the whole Frame of Heathenism was, and if it be possible to deny, (even under any Sense of the Law, and Dictates

ſtates of Nature,) its being the higheſt Reproach of Mankind; and that the very Myſteries of that Heatheniſh Worſhip, were ſo horrid and impure, as they needed a Vail from the common View of the World.

II. Nor can there be a rational Reflection this Day, on that ſtrange Monſter of Mahumetaniſm, but as of a viſible Prodigy of the Judgment of GOD, on theſe Parts of the Earth; upon their Apoſtacy from the Chriſtian Faith, by giving Men up to ſuch an Impoſture, as expoſeth the very Name and Form of Religion to Deriſion; and can never claim a Reception, either from the Purity of its Rule, or internal Evidence of the Truth thereof, or of its having any poſſible Conſiſtence with itſelf.

III. That 'tis ſure alſo, that the *Jewiſh Religion*, had never another Being, but in the Truth and Faith of Chriſtianity, and where this Foundation is divided from, it hath none at all; yea, that that People, unto this Day, are ſuch a confirming Witneſs to the Chriſtian Religion, as 'tis ſtrange this doth not beget deeper Impreſſions on Mens Spirits. So that there is an abſolute Neceſſity,

ſity, we muſt either forego the Uſe of Reaſon, or ſee, if there be not ſuch a Rule given and revealed for Commerce betwixt God and Man, as the Scripture, (where the Laws and Conſtitutions of the Chriſtian Faith, are for this End held forth) that 'tis then ſure, there is no ſuch Thing, as any Religion in the Earth, but what were ſo highly irrational and abſurd, as ſhould rather juſtify Atheiſm.

Queſt. II. *What ſpecial Confirmation to* Chriſtianity, *can this viſible State of the* Jews *bear, who are in ſo expreſs an Oppoſition to the Goſpel of Chriſt?*

Anſw. IF this were brought near our Thoughts, we ſhould find it one of the great Aſſiſtances to our Faith.

I. THAT 'tis ſure, there is ſuch a People and Race, as a living and viſible Evidence to our Senſe, of the Truth of that renowned Nation, and Church of *Iſrael*, to which the Oracles of God were committed; and thus is ſtill, as ſome Part of the evident Ruins of that once flouriſhing State.

II. THAT the World may see, such a People kept by themselves, and not mixed with the Nations, whose Fathers, from one Generation to another, did still own the Divinity of the Old Testament; and doth attest that Doctrine, in which the Truth and Substance of Christianity lies, even whilst with greatest Malice they oppose the Christian Faith, to witness, that there can be no possible Collusion and Deceit here.

III. THEIR being under a Stroke of that judicial Induration and Blindness of Mind, as no Reason could possibly comprehend such a Thing, how they should not see the Light in the very Noon-day of the Gospel, if we were not expressly foretold, that they should be concluded under such an Arrest of Judgment, until the *Fulness of the Gentiles* be brought in.

IV. THAT so immediate an Appearance of GOD, is in the Judgment of that People, both in the Manner and Continuance thereof, as no Instance could ever be found to resemble the same, since Man was formed in the Earth; and is as a conspicuous Monument of divine Wrath, set up for every Age and Time of the Church,

Church, to turn aſide and conſider this great Sight, and enquire what means ſo ſtrange and amazing a Thing, as the State of the ſcattered *Jews* is, now under the Times of the Goſpel.

V. THAT this Deſolation on them, and Stroke, had ſuch ſpecial concurring Circumſtances for giving Light thereto, as being not above forty eight Years, after the Death of Chriſt, with their Hands, as it were, hot and reeking with that Blood which they had wiſhed on them, and their Children; that it ſhould be at that Time of the Paſſover, which was the very ſame of the Sufferings of our bleſſed Lord there, and pointing, as with the Finger, at the ſame; as alſo by the *Romans*, whoſe Intereſt in their Oppoſition to Chriſt, they pretended to own.

Queſt. III. *Is the* Way and Manner *of the* Goſpels Promulgation *ſuch, as no other Profeſſion could ever pretend to, and where all may ſee, there can be no human Intereſt or Contrivance in the ſame?*

Anſw. IT is undeniable, that no Intereſt elſe was ever in ſuch a Way promoted, and it does exceed all natural

Understanding, how the Truth of Christianity could in this Manner prevail.

I. To persuade Men, without any Motives, or Inducements from this present World, to embrace a Doctrine so wholly repugnant to Nature; yea, to prefer an Interest of Things not seen, and which none ever in the Earth saw, to the most desirable Objects of Sense.

II. To admit no implicite Reception from any, but on their exactest Enquiry and Trial herein; or, in another Way, claim an Interest in Mens Affections; but by a full Assent of their Light and Judgment to the same.

III. To admit no Gratification to the most predominant Desires and Inclinations of Men towards any darling Sin; which, according to human Wisdom, would be judged of an absolute Necessity for gaining any Acceptance with such; yea, to give no partial Respect to the greatest Princes more than to the meanest.

IV. To pursue its Interest, by so plain a Discovery of the Death, and Sufferings of our blessed LORD, with the whole Ignominy thereof, when nothing could more evidently controul such an End, by any Rules of human Wisdom and

and Policy, if there had been consulting with Flesh and Blood herein.

V. AND, 'tis sure, there could be no Design, without an immediate divine Power, in such a Manner to plead the Interest of Christianity with Men, by inserting Affliction, and the Cross in the first Entry, as essential to the Profession thereof, and holding forth the Necessity of taking on the Yoke of CHRIST, without which none can be his Disciples.

Quest. IV. *But wherein doth the Evidence of that great Demonstration of the Gospel, most clearly appear, in the* Love and Unity of Christians *among themselves, which we find Christ doth so specially press for this End, that the World might know, and have such a visible Seal of his* divine Mission? *John* xvii. 21.

Answ. THE Greatness of this Demonstration may be thus evident to all.

I. THAT 'tis so clearly demonstrative of the Purity of our Religion, which can admit of no Bitterness, Strife, Recrimination, or such Indecencies of Heat and Passion, which are the fatal Effects of Discord in the Church; and

thus lets us see the Excellency of the Spirit and Rule of the Gospel

II. THAT, thus also we may know the Power and Efficacy of the Truth thereof, which is according to Godliness, upon Mens Hearts, in subduing these Distempers of the Mind and Judgment.

III. THAT this doth so specially tend to make Religion lovely, and to draw forth Matter of Praise and Blessing to GOD from the World, when they see such a native Effect of Christianity as this, to make those who profess the same in that Manner shine forth in Tenderness, Humility, and brotherly Love, so that they become as a public Good and Blessing to Mankind in the Places they are in.

IV. THIS appears also from the Nature of that Union in the Church of Christ, and amongst his Followers, which only a divine Power could both frame and make effectual; and 'tis sure, that no human Society or Constitution, could ever claim such an Unity therein as this is; where not only Persons of all Nations and Languages, and of all Conditions, both high and low, but of the most different Interests, Humours, and

and dividing Circumſtances in other Things, do yet in ſo marvellous an Harmony, meet in the Body of Chriſt, which is his Church here in the Earth.

V. BECAUSE, herein alſo doth the Glory and Honour of our bleſſed Head, more eminently appear in ſecuring this Unity of his Church, under a Diverſity of Light and Judgment otherwiſe, by a Spirit of Love, Meekneſs, and Condeſcendence among his People; than by impoſing the moſt ſevere and abſolute Uniformity in all Things, to be the alone Condition of Chriſtian Communion.

Queſt. V. *But what Strength and Evidence doth this* Demonſtration *of the Goſpel, now bear in ſo* divided a State *of Religion, and when the Wounds and Breaches of the Church this Day are like to bleed unto Death?*

Anſw. Whatever juſt Cauſe be of Grief, yet is there none for darkening the Truth of this Demonſtration on theſe Grounds.

I. That none can deny the Perfection of the Rule of the Goſpel, for there is a moſt

moſt firm and entire Unity amongſt all the Followers of Chriſt on the Earth.

II. That no Oppoſition is made thereto, but what hath been foretold, as one of the greateſt Trials of the Church under the New Teſtament, and the Spirit of GOD doth moſt expreſly point at in theſe latter Times.

III. Becauſe the furtheſt Oppoſition thereto, can be no more Cauſe for any to ſtumble, or queſtion the Truth of this Demonſtration, than whether there is a Devil, whoſe greateſt Deſign hath ever been to divide and break Chriſtians amongſt themſelves.

IV. Becauſe this Union, which is chiefly myſtical and inviſible, is much greater often, than what this Way may appear to the World, and and of that Kind, as is not interrupted by Diſtance of Place, or any want of local Communion.

V. That ſuch a Guard is ſet by the Lord, unto this Piece of his Glory, to oppoſe any Invaſion thereon, that there ſtands an Angel with a flaming Sword, upon every Hand in the Commands and Threatnings of the Goſpel, to ſecure this bleſſed Unity of the Saints among themſelves,

ſelves, ſo as none can invade the ſame, but on their higheſt Peril, of oppoſing that which is as the Apple of Chriſt's Eye.

VI. That 'tis ever found, that this Demonſtration hath ſome clear Evidence amongſt ſuch, who are indeed the Diſciples of Chriſt, and, according to their Advance in the Life, and Power of Chriſtianity, doth the more brightly ſhine forth; ſo that the nearer the Lines are to the Centre, the nearer alſo are they among themſelves.

VII. That, in all Times, there hath been ſome tremendous Mark of the Judgment of God, made viſible on ſuch who are contentious, and have made it their Work to cauſe Diviſion in the Church, and ſow Diſcord amongſt Brethren.

Queſt. VI. *But what hath the Church now in theſe latter Days to compenſate, and make up the Want of that great Demonſtration by* Miracles, *and ſuch extraordinary Confirmations of the Chriſtian Faith, as were in the firſt Times?*

Anſw. I. We may hereby ſee, that the Seal of Martyrdom, which came in the

the Room of Miracles to the Church, hath exceeded that which was in the firſt Times of the Goſpel.

II. That there have been ſince ſuch innumerable ſhining Examples of Holineſs, yea, theſe continued to this Day, whom the World might ſee, did walk in the Light and Power of Chriſtianity, as ſure as Men walk under the Power and Virtue of a living Soul.

III. That we now ſee what a Length the Courſe of the Goſpel, and of the Church Militant is come, and how far thus the Times of the Gentiles are fulfilled, which once was ſo contrary to all human Appearance.

IV. That ſo ſure and exact a Performance of the Scripture, is now undeniable in the Event, and of ſuch great and marvellous Things, which were foretold under the New Teſtament, that in an ordinary Way none could have believed, what we ſee with our Eyes; and now have theſe Things, which were in former Ages the Object of the Churches Faith, been made the Object of our Senſe; and 'tis ſure, this is ſuch a Seal and Confirmation to our Faith, in theſe laſt Times, as doth much exceed the greateſt Miracles,

cles, which were in the firſt Planting of the Goſpel.

V. Tho' we may not reſolve our Faith on any extraordinary Providences, or lay the leaſt Weight hereon to ſupport the Authority of the Doctrine we profeſs, (ſince this only is founded on that ſacred Revelation of divine Truth in the Scripture, which is the infallible Rule to diſcern true Miracles, and what is God's Seal herein, under the undoubted Signature, and Stamp of his own Power, and working in the ſame;) yet hath there been ſuch incontroulable Evidence of extraordinary Signs and Confirmations to confirm the Truth of the Reformed Religion, ſince the Reformation, as in no Ages paſt was ever known, but with the firſt planting of the Goſpel among the Gentiles.

SECTION IV.

QUESTION I.

IS it clear and demonſtrable, that the Doctrine of Chriſt, *is a* Soul-quickening *and* experimental Religion, *and the Trial*

Trial thereof, in its moſt ſupernatural Truths, of ſuch rational Certainty and Evidence, that the World can no more deny or queſtion the ſame, than thoſe Experiments of Nature, *that are of moſt univerſal Uſe?*

Anſw. Tho' Men looked but at a Diſtance here, or were come from Heatheniſm, ſo far as to make a ſerious Trial of Chriſtianity, 'tis ſure, they could not but ſee, and be fully perſuaded in their Judgment hereof on theſe Grounds.

I. That a Diſcovery is undoubted and clear in the Scripture of ſo great Things, as, that there is a Holy Ghoſt, and there be his Workings on Mens Souls, of Peace with God, and the Joy of his Preſence, which all who receive the Goſpel are called to know and prove on their own Trial.

II. That this Witneſs of Chriſtian Experience, hath as diſcernable a Conſent and Harmony therewith, as Face anſwereth to Face in the Glaſs, and is clear to be no caſual Thing, but every Step in this Way of Trial, is by Scripture Light, and what Chriſtians did before

fore read there, they know it now by Feelings on their own Souls.

III. That this, in all Ages of the Church, and wherever such as served God in the Spirit, were found in the most remote Parts from others, hath still been the same; and, like a great Roll, is sent down from one Generation to another, with their confirmatory Seal, that GOD is faithful and true, in those Truths of his Word, which seem most incredible to the World, and now come to our Hand, to require the same Attestation and Witness.

IV. That they who know and testify these Things, sometimes found it not easy to believe the same, and did no less judge of such great Experiments of Religion, as a Dream or imaginary Thing, than most now do, until they knew them by Experience on their Soul.

V. That such also have been the most burning and shining Lights that ever were in the Church, and these innumerable in all Ages declare the same; and that in the Mouth of the Grave, and Entrance to an eternal State, when no outward Interest could sway them hereto.

VI. That it must be a Matter of greatest Assurance, which hath then pressed the most tender Parents, with their last and dying Breath, to commend the same Trial to their Children, and to charge their being earnest herein, as the greatest Interest they could leave them.

VII. That whatever Differences be oft among these in some Matters of Truth: Yet, in the Certainty of this great Trial of the Life, Power, and Comforts of Religion, there is an harmonious Oneness in the same Testimony in all Times of the Church.

VIII. That if any question this, because so remote from Mens Senses, and the Judgment of carnal Reason; the Reality of its Effects doth unanswerably prove, both the Reality and Excellency of the Cause.

Quest. II. *What clear and rational Conviction can you offer, of so great a Thing, as* Conversion *of Men from a State of Nature, to a* new State by Grace, *which doth raise them, as far above the Residue of Mankind, as Reason doth above the State of the Beasts?*

Answ.

Anſw. Tho' I ſhould ſtrive againſt the Conviction of ſuch a Miracle, and Demonſtration of the Goſpel, as Converſion is, yet were it not poſſible to deny ſuch demonſtrative Evidences as the World hath hereof.

I. That it is ſure, ſuch a Change is made eſſentially requiſite to the Being, and Conſtitution of a Chriſtian, by the whole Conſent of the Scripture.

II. That there was never yet an Argument in Nature, for one's being a Chriſtian in the Life and Power thereof; whatever may be for a naked Form or Show.

III. That they are not a few, but innumerable Inſtances in all Times, and of all Ranks and Conditions of Men, on whom ſo great a Change and Difference, hath been made thus evident, both from themſelves, what once they were, and from the Reſidue of the World.

IV. That this hath been, not only upon ſuch as have been ſignally impious in their Practice, but who in their Judgment were wont to deride Holineſs as a Fancy; ſo as Atheiſts muſt grant that there have been as profeſt Atheiſts ſometimes as themſelves, who have been

made such conspicuous Monuments of the Power of the Gospel.

V. That none can object here, as once the *Jews* did, Do any of the Rulers, or such as the World counts most wise and knowing, stand Witnesses to the same? when it is so known, that there have not been more wise, learned, and judicious, in the Things of Reason upon the Earth, than such as have been eminent Examples of the power of Conversion.

VI. That its marvellous Effects in subduing Men, from what once was their predominant Interest and Idol, and to part from what had been as their Right-eye or Hand, could only be from an immediate divine Power.

VII. That such as were greatest Adversaries to the Truth, have been made no less eminent Instruments in the Service of Christ, and choice Vessels of Honour, than once they were in their Enmity and Opposition.

VIII. That this Change hath been discernable in Times of most visible Persecutions and Hazard, when no outward Advantage or Gain could have the least Influence thereon. Now, as these are demonstraably clear, so can there be no possible

poſſible Ground to queſtion this. 1. That the Scripture is faithful and true in ſo great a Diſcovery. 2. That there is a divine Spirit, and a Power above Nature, which accompanies the ſame in ſuch a Change. 3. That there are ſurely, contrary States in another World, when they are ſo undeniably manifeſt here.

Queſt. III. *But can ſo great an Experiment of Religion, as that of* Communion betwixt God and Men, *here upon Earth, be made rationally convincing to ſuch, as are themſelves Strangers thereto; and for a further confirming of the Chriſtian Faith?*

Anſw. Tho' this be an Experiment of divine Truth, of a more tranſcendent Intereſt and Value, than all that ever were in Nature, yet it is no leſs evident, and there can be no poſſible Deluſion herein, if,

I. 'Tis that to which ſo innumerable a Company, bears Teſtimony, and hath ſet down the ſame, as that which not once or twice they have approved, but in the continued Trial of their Life.

II. That 'tis known to the World, that such as testify what they do, and have so oft found in the Retirement of their Souls with GOD, are of as discerning Spirits, to know the true Value of Things, as any else; yea, such whose Testimony in other Things, the worst of Men could not refuse nor deny.

III. That 'tis undeniably evident, such must have another Acquaintance and Society than that of Men; which, not only makes these hidden Exercises of Godliness so desireable, (where all may see they more flee than follow any human Witness,) but also makes so visible a Change, both in their Case and Countenance, after most sad Anguish and Down-castings of Spirit.

IV. That it is so evident also, how such as are most serious this Way, have been visibly oft raised above their ordinary Case, and Frame in Prayer, and other Duties of Religion; yea, in that Manner, as they who never knew there is a Holy Ghost, but by Report, could not withstand so clear Conviction of the Reality hereof, that can beget such Liberty, humble Tenderness, and melting

of

of Heart, yea, such discernable Joy and Confidence.

V. That no Delusion or false Shew can be here, when 'tis ever seen, that such as are most serious and frequent in Prayer, and these hid Retirements with GOD, are the most flourishing also in the Vitals of Christianity, and have the most honourable Lustre and Appearance of any in their Profession.

VI. That 'tis such only, whose Joy and Comfort is most specially discernable beyond others, when these lower Springs of outward Help and Encouragement are most visibly shut up.

Quest. IV. *Is that great and experimental Part of Religion, in the* Power of the Conscience *over Man, such as may be as demonstrable to the World, as the Truth of a rational Being?*

Answ. It may be matter of Wonder, that Men are not struck with deeper Convictions hereon, when they cannot but see,

I. That tho' this be the greatest Tormenter and Troubler of the World, yet is there no possible Retreat from its Power,

Power, tho' Men ſhould flee to the uttermoſt Parts of the Earth, but doth it enforce the Soul to a Reflection on itſelf, even when it trembleth at that Sight.

II. That it cauſeth great Fear and Horror upon the Commitment of ſecret Sins, when no Dread of human Witneſs, or of viſible Hazard this Way could occaſion it.

III. That it admits no Violence in any to out-dare the ſame, but is a Power that the greateſt Monarchs find to be ſtronger than they; and is ſuch, that theſe oft are enforced for preſent Eaſe and Relief, either to divert, or bribe the ſame, by ſome falſe Grounds of Peace.

IV. That it conſtrains Men to juſtify GOD, and judge themſelves, (when his Hand doth purſue them,) and to find out their Sin, and Guilt; which was before hid.

V. That it makes Men alſo afraid to be alone with themſelves; and to tremble at the Word of Truth, becauſe its Light doth torment them, by that unavoidable Application which Conſcience makes hereof.

VI. Yea, it makes Mens Guilt ſo legible oft in their Countenance, (even when

when they ſtudy moſt to conceal it,) that all may ſee there is an Accuſer within, whoſe Authority and Power cannot poſſibly be declined.

VII. That with ſo remarkable a Confidence and Security, it doth ſupport Mens Spirit, and makes it eaſy to ſuſtain its greateſt Infirmities from without, when it is a Friend; yea, and upholds the oppreſt, with unſpeakable Peace and Comfort, when it doth oft cauſe the Oppreſſor to tremble.

Queſt. V. *But what doth moſt neceſſarily reſult from ſo clear a Demonſtration, as the* Conſcience *is, for confirming of our Faith?*

Anſw. I. That 'tis infallibly thus clear, that there is a higher Power and Judgment, to which all Mankind is ſubjected, and gives the World an unavoidable Demonſtration, both of the Being of GOD, and of the Truth of his Word, in the great and ſupernatural Diſcovery which it makes hereof.

II. That there is a ſupreme and infallible Law alſo, and inviſible Judge above us, under whoſe Power and Authority

rity this Court of Juſtice, doth, without reſpect of Perſons, both ſummon, arreſt, bring in witneſs, and ſentence great and ſmall.

III. That the internal Government of our bleſſed Lord, this Way, (both in the Severity of his Rebukes, and moſt ſenſible Enlargements of Peace and Comfort,) is unavoidably demonſtrated.

IV. That it bears ſo clear Evidence to unknown and undoubted Relief, and none elſe could be ever found, for theſe Wounds and Stings of the Conſcience, but in the Light and Power of Chriſtianity.

V. That it is ſimply impoſſible for Men to delight freely in a Courſe of Sin, when no human Power can diſarm the Conſcience of that ſo intolerable a Sting, by which it begins ſo early a Hell within the Soul.

VI. That, ſuch is the Power and Peace of a good Conſcience, as can make it ſtand unbroken, amidſt the greateſt Ruins and Terrors of the World, when under ſuch a Guard as that of its own Innocency.

SECTION

SECTION V.

QUESTION I.

IS the Evidence of a Kingdom of Darkneſs, *in a direct Oppoſition and Contrariety to that Kingdom of Light, which Chriſt hath ſet up by the Goſpel, ſuch as the Certainty thereof may be a Matter of Senſe, as well as of Faith?*

Anſw. That is of ſuch ſpecial Uſe, both to confirm the Chriſtian Faith, and awake ſuch to deeper Reflection on the ſame, with whom there ſeems no Hope to prevail, but by Proofs from palpable Experience; and it is not poſſible to deny,

I. That there is ſuch a Power, as the Devil and thoſe wicked Spirits encompaſſing the Earth, yea, that they have an ordinary and familiar Converſe with many therein.

II. That theſe Spirits, tho' once originally excellent, have fallen into ſuch an Apoſtacy, as all may ſee their Aim and only Pleaſure, is to diſhonour GOD, and deſtroy his Image in Man.

III. That

III. That it is impoſſible to deny the Marks of that Power and Conqueſt, which the Prince of this World hath every where amongſt Men; yea, how viſibly many are transformed into his Image, by ſuch prodigious and deſperate Acts of Wickedneſs, as we ſhould think human Nature could not but tremble at.

IV. That none can queſtion the Certainty, both of Senſe and Reaſon, which is in the Truth of Apparitions, and bodily Poſſeſſions of Men in all Ages, and in all Places of the Earth; and can need no Demonſtration for this, that in many Places of the Earth, the Devil is both viſibly and audibly known.

V. That he is ſo manifeſt in his Appearance, as a Spirit of Blaſphemy, which impetuouſly acts Men to war againſt Heaven with their Tongue, in ſuch Oaths and Curſing, as have no ſenſual Pleaſure, or Gain herein; yea, as a Spirit of Deluſion, in ſo viſible an Excitement of others to ſuch Extravagancies, under a Shew of Religion, as are inconſiſtent with any Uſe of Judgment or Reaſon.

VI. That ſo innumerable a Company of human Race, hath in all Ages, been in

in a formal, and expreſs Covenant with theſe Powers of Darkneſs, is undeniable, upon the moſt ſevere and impartial Enquiry herein.

Queſt. II. *What ſpecial* Aſſiſtance *to your Faith, doth the Certainty of theſe* Powers *of* Darkneſs *bring therewith?*

Anſw. I. It is plain, that ſuch a Party, both in their Nature and continued Actings, are in a ſtated Oppoſition to the Kingdom of Chriſt.

II. It is viſible, that the Prey, which theſe mighty Hunters do follow after, is not our Body, or the Things of this Life, but it is the immortal Soul and future State, that Man might be made Sharer of the ſame Miſery, under which they are concluded.

III. All may ſee their being under Reſtraint of a ſupreme Power above them, and under ſuch Chains, as do irreſiſtibly bound their Rage and Enmity againſt Man, by an inviſible Guard and Hedge, which they cannot break over.

IV. Their greateſt Rage, and Struggling, is againſt the Converſion of Sinners to GOD, and to hold faſt his Poſ-

ſeſſion in ſuch, as the Spirit of God, doth not more clearly move for their Reſcue, than thoſe do to croſs that bleſſed Deſign of the Goſpel.

V. There are none that are ſerious in the Truth and Life of Religion, but find themſelves purſued by ſuch an Adverſary; and have as diſcernably another Party than themſelves, or the World to conflict with, as if they ſaw them in a viſible Shape.

VI. That, by the Goſpel, and within the Precinct of the Church, there is diſcernably a much greater Reſtraint of Satan's Dominion and Power, than in all the Earth beſides; yea, that the Advantage of being within the external Covenant of Baptiſm, is ſo demonſtrable, that the leaſt yielding or Tendency to a renouncing of the ſame, or any Acts of Homage, for making Uſe of his Help, hath ever made Way for ſome more extraordinary Power of the Devil over ſuch than others.

VII. Thus is a moſt undeniable Confirmation given of an inviſible World, and of ſuch intellectual Beings there, as are far above Man; yea, and it is plain, that there is an Intercourſe betwixt Men and

and Spirits, such may clearly shew the Interest that Man's Soul hath in another State and World than this.

Quest. III. *Is that great Truth of the* Immortality of the Soul, *and its never dying State after Death, as fully demonstrable to Reason, as it is by the furthest Certainty of Faith?*

Answ. Tho' it be so amazing a Thing to believe an immortal Soul, and eternal State, wherein it must shortly enter, as by few seems to be apprehended, yet are its demonstrative Evidences such, that except Men lose all Sense and Use of Reason, it is not possible to deny,

I. That there is such an immaterial and active Substance, as the Soul, which can admit of no Cause, either of its Decay or Dissolution from the Body; yea, that the greatest Excellency of this visible Creation, is here, that such a vital Beam of Life, Light, and Immortality, as the Soul of Man is therein.

II. Tho' we cannot see this rare and wonderful Being, yet we fully perceive it to be something distinct from the Body,

and to have a distinct Interest, both in its Griefs and Comforts.

III. That it can have no Dependence on the Body in its Being, which doth noway depend thereon in its Actings and Exercise; but is oft most vigorous and clear, in its Exercise, not only when most separate and abstract from sensible Things, but when the Flesh is under the greatest Decay, and near its Dissolution; to shew the Soul lieth not a dying with the Body, but hath its distinct Subsistence, to live in a separate State when it dies

IV. Its being peculiarly framed for Converse, and Intercourse with spiritual Beings, yea, its being the only Part of the visible Creation admitted to Fellowship with the invisible GOD, and to have reflex Acts upon itself.

V. It is a Being of a higher Nature and Value, than the Sun, Moon, and Stars; which not only can know, and conceive of Things above the Evidence and Impressions of Sense, but makes a rational Choice of Good, (tho' cross to any sensual Pleasure;) yea, to rejoice, and have its proper Delights, when the Body is afflicted and in pain; nor can it be

be defiled from the moſt loathſome Sores and Defilements of the Fleſh, ſo as we muſt needs ſee, both its Dominion and Preheminence over the Body, and have aſſuredly a Subſiſtence without the ſame.

VI. It is ſuch a Being, as is capable of a Happineſs beyond the whole Extent of the World, and hath theſe intellectual Faculties, which cannot poſſibly want, both Objects ſuitable thereto, and Enjoyments above the Senſes.

VII. The moſt choice and excellent, are uſually moſt afflicted, and cruſhed under the Feet of their Oppreſſors, whilſt the vileſt flouriſh in the Earth, and have no Bands in their Death, ſo that ſuch were of all Men the moſt miſerable, if in this Life both their Being and Bleſſedneſs were terminated.

VIII. That there is ſo univerſal a Senſe of Immortality, that they who both fear and hate the Evidences hereof, yet under ſome Conſtraint of Reaſon, have the ſame for a continued Terror.

IX. That it is ſure the Certainty of Death makes it ſimply impoſſible, for Things only ſuited to this Life of Senſe, to be the ultimate Good, or Fruition of Man; ſince elſe the Beaſts ſhould have a

greater Happineſs than ſuch, if it were not for Reſpect to an after and immortal State.

Queſt. IV. *What Confirmation to your Faith, does that great and amazing Change by* Death *offer, when it would ſeem to be ſomething merely* natural?

Anſw. Tho' the only wiſe God moves herein, according to the Nature of ſecond Cauſes, and it hath various Ways of Approach unto Men; yet may all ſee with the furtheſt Conviction of rational Evidence, as well as Certainty of Faith,

I. That Death in its firſt Conſtitution is Penal; and comes by a divine Appointment unto all, not merely as Men, but as Sinners; and to be no natural Accident and Reſult of our primitive and original Frame.

II. That 'tis Death, as a Penalty, which keeps the Fear and Dread thereof ſo much on all living, it being in that laſt Period, that the eternal State of Men is decided.

III. That the Sting and Bitterneſs of Sin, is ſo manifeſt in innumerable Diſeaſes and Strokes of Death, which many

feel

feel an hundred Times ere they die once, beyond any other of the Creatures.

IV. Tho' the Sentence of dying is on all, yet so great a Difference is betwixt the Saints and Residue of Men here, that its penal Execution on the ungodly, is such as Nature can give no Support under it.

V. That supernatural Presages and Warnings hereof, ere it come, are in all Times known and sure; yea, such extraordinary Evidences are sometimes of the precise Time, as could have no possible Rise from any natural Cause.

VI. That its immediate Commission from a supreme and invisible Power, is so evident, in such Executions oft, of this Sentence, by Sword, Famine, and Pestilence, as the visible Finger of God, in a just Retribution unto Men for Sin, may be no less seen, and a supernatural Casuality, than the Effects have been undoubted and clear; to shew, that such is the State of Man, that this great Revolution by Death, doth each Moment depend on a Call from Heaven.

VII. That the Certainty of something supernatural in this King of Terrors, is so known, that as no Relief can possibly be

be found, but in the Truth and Power of Chriſtianity, to ſet Men both above the Fear of Death, and an after State, when once it comes near.

VIII. Yea, that it is ſurely above the Poſſibility of Nature, which can bear out in this great Adventure and Trial of Mens Faith, both in the Truth and Strength thereof, at Death; for which End, the Lord hath thus choſen that by ſo ſtrange an Entry, and at ſo dark a Port, they ſhould firſt paſs to the full Enjoyment of that glorious State above.

Queſt. V. *What* Evidence *and* Demonſtration *can you ſhew, to confirm ſo great a Faith of an* eternal Glory *prepared for the Saints in Heaven, and of its* earneſt *and* firſt Fruits *here, as may ſtrike an undeniable Conviction hereof on the World?*

Anſw. I. The viſible ripening and Reſemblance to ſuch a State, in all the Degrees of a Chriſtian's Growth, to a more full Stature of the Man in Chriſt, may be no leſs evident than the natural Growth of our Body.

II. Tho' the opening of theſe Gates of the ſecond World be hid, (ſo as no human

human Senſe can diſcern the Spirit in its Aſcent through thoſe higher Regions, to that unconceivable Paradiſe and Glory in the third Heaven,) yet is the triumphant Entry and Paſſage of innumerable Chriſtians at Death, ſuch as hath oft been a Matter of Senſe and cleareſt Evidence to the World.

III. Such alſo were both humble, tender, and ſincere in their Life, and then in ſo great a Compoſure of Judgment, that all might ſee, they knew what made them glad, and could ſwallow up, both the Fears and Bitterneſs of Death; yea, and this was not given for their own Support only, but for a more public Uſe, for the Conviction and Confirmation of others.

IV. The State of Glory is demonſtrable, and hath been oft brought down to Mens Senſe, by theſe raviſhing Joys of the Martyrs of Chriſt, and Exultation of Spirit, even in the Flames.

V. Supernatural Comforts attend the Life of Chriſtianity, and can have no poſſible Riſe from the Fleſh, and outward Cauſes, with that Joy and Peace, which by ſo natural a Reſult follows well-doing, and any Service of Love for Chriſt;

Christ; which all may see to be the first Fruits of that Harvest which is above.

VI. Rare and marvellous a Frame of the new Man, set up in this lower Region of Grace, in so discernable a Conformity to the blessed GOD, and Resemblance to another State than here, to which the World is but as a Place of Pilgrimage, Trial, and a preparatory State only.

VII. Visible Returns of Joy and Comfort, Christians have after saddest Conflicts and Down-castings, and such Day-break of vital quickening Beams of divine Light, that have often been no less evident, than that of the Martyrs at the Stake, who cried out, Now, he is come, he is come.

VIII. Their Breathings of Love after an unseen Christ, and visible Effects of its Power on Men, might shew some begun Translation of the Soul so far herein, as to be more where it loves than where it lives.

IX. Tho' we cannot see here, that ineffable Glory, which is above, but should have our Faith instead of Eyes; yet such is the Truth of Holiness, as doth not only evidence, but in its own Nature

ture partake of a future Glory; so as every Degree and Act thereof, doth enter in a begun State of Fruition and Blessedness, and makes it simply impossible for a good Man, in any true Exercise of Godliness, not to be happy also, and thus in a more near Capacity to know that Joy unspeakable, and full of Glory, which is above.

X. By so sure, known, and tried a Passage betwixt Heaven and Mens Souls in Prayer, with so settled a Trade of Commerce this Way, and certain Returns, as with Assurance, such can say, tho' they must change their Place, yet not their Company.

XI. The whole Dispensations of Providence, in *Israel's* Passage through the Wilderness, and to so excellent a Country as *Canaan*, is no less sure in itself, than that it was given for an Emblem and Type of the journying and militant State of the Saints here, and to be a solemn Pledge of that *Canaan* above.

XII. Such is the Magnificence, Harmony, and Order of these visible Heavens, and celestial Bodies there, with their different Degrees of Glory, (tho' all illuminated from the same Fountain

of

of Light the Sun,) as we may judge by a divine Ordination to have some peculiar Respect to that End, to awake and raise our Thoughts to these higher Regions of Glory, which are above all these, by what is thus visible to our Eyes; where the redeemed of the Lord shall be ever fixed, and shine forth as the Sun in the Kingdom of their Father.

Quest. VI. *What visible and awakening* Evidences, *are there of the Truth of an* Hell, *and that State of* Horror *and* Torment *in another World, which even to Mens Senses here, might present the Certainty thereof?*

Answ. I. That it can be no more sure, that there is such a Power, and Party, as that of the Devils, than the Reality of some such a horrid Region, and Place also, to which they belong, and are adjudged to.

II. From so innumerable a Company of human Race, as are not in the visible Service of these infernal Spirits, but Partakers of the same Nature, and Enmity against the holy God, and his Image, which doth clearly Witness their Respect

Reſpect and Tendency to the ſame State and Place, and Confederacy in their Judgment, as here in their Sin.

III. Such viſible Impreſſions of vindictive Juſtice are on Mens Souls, with ſuch Horror of Conſcience, and unſufferable Torments this Way, as in all Ages have been known by moſt remarkable Inſtances, (when not in the leaſt Diſtemper of their natural Reaſon,) that may preſent to Mens Senſes ſomething of a viſible Hell, as convincingly, as if one had riſen from the Dead for the ſame.

IV. A trembling Senſe, and Terror of divine Vengeance, oft follows upon horrid Acts of Wickedneſs, and ſo eminently breaks forth upon a ſurprizing Sight of Death, that all may ſee ſomething more dreadful herein, than in the Diſſolution of Nature; and the Power and preſent Arreſt of a future Judgment is made viſible in the ſame.

V. There are begun Degrees, of Blaſpheming and Rage againſt God, becauſe of his Plagues, and ſuch Prodigies of Cruelty exerciſed by Men here in the Earth, as may be evident to all to be more than human, and rather the Effects

of infernal Spirits acting in a human Shape.

VI. So clear a Prelude and beginning of Hell, is in that judicial Obduration, and Blindneſs, which many are given up to, (under the greateſt Diſcoveries of Light,) that all may ſee their being thus bound over in Chains, and ſhut up in Priſon, until Death bring them forth to the Execution; and that no Relief or Application of the Means of Grace hath then any Succeſs.

VII. Such a Map and Shadow of eternal Vengeance, is in theſe terrible Acts of divine Judgment inflicted here on Apoſtates, and Perſecutors of the Truth, and other flagitious Perſons, which with the very firſt View might preſent an awful and immediate Appearance of God in the ſame, ſome ſtrange and ſupernatural Puniſhment is oft ſo viſible on the Workers of Iniquity.

VIII. And, (whatever be of natural Cauſes in ſuch viſible Repreſentations here in the Earth, as that ſulphureous Lake where once *Sodom* was, and thoſe burning Mountains of *Hæcla*, *Ætna*, and *Veſuvius*,) yet we may truly judge that they are thus ſet before the World, as viſible

visible Memorials of the infernal Flames, and as it were so many Chimnies or Vent-holes thereof, for such who will not believe the same, because they do not yet see or feel such a Thing.

Quest. VII. *What* Assistances *hath our* Faith, *of that great and wonderful Truth of the* Resurrection of the Body, *after its Dissolution in the* Grave unto Dust?

Answ. I. It hath great Assistance from that visible and stupendous Frame of the Heavens and the Earth, when 'tis sure, that the same infinite Power, that hath not only made Man, but the whole Creation, can as easily collect and re-unite the dispersed Ashes of the Body, as form the same.

II. From that greatest Pledge hereof, in the Resurrection of the Body of Christ.

III. From that Tribulation and sore Pain, that the Saints here in their outward Man are exposed to, since it is sure, that in the holy Justice of God, he did not give such Bodies for Labour, and for Toil, and to his Martyrs, to endure unexpressible

Torments for Christ, at last to perish for ever.

IV. From these visible Resemblances and Prefigurations of the Resurrection, which the Lord hath given to confirm our Faith herein, in the ordinary Course and Productions of Nature; so as all may see, how every Night is as the Grave of the Day-light, and each Morning a new Resurrection of the same; and how visible an Image of Death is in each Season of the Winter, with so marvellous and beautiful a Resurrection of the Earth, on every Return of the Spring, in the Herbs, Flowers, and Plants, taking Life, and rising again, in the Leaves, Blossoms, and Fruits; yea, this is such a Variety, as may no less convincingly evidence an infinite divine Power herein, than that the same Body of Man should be raised at the last Day.

V. From that continued Miracle of the Harvest after the Seed-time, with so amazing a Production of the Grain sown in the Earth, and its first dying there before it be quickened, so as to be at last brought to thirty, sixty, yea, sometimes, an hundred Fold, out of the very same Grain; which to these, who had never known

known the ſame, would ſeem incredible, and above all Reaſon to conceive, or give Credit thereto.

CHAP. III.

The confirming Work of Religion, *improved with Reſpect to the Times, to* clear the Way of the Lord *herein, before this Generation, and let us ſee how nothing is ſo ſtrange in the* Events *of this Day, which ſhould not more ſtrengthen, then ſhake, and that the* God of the Reformed Church, *doth ſtill own the ſame Intereſt, according to his* Faithfulneſs: *Which is here briefly pointed at, upon ſome ſpecial* Enquiry, *propoſed about the ſame.*

SECTION I.

QUESTION. I.

WHAT can afford both Light, *and* Confirmation to our Faith, *in ſuch a Time, when we ſee the* Work of the Lord *about his Church, to be moſt remarkably now a* Work of Judgment, *with*

ſuch dark and ſearching Trials therewith, as former Times have not known?

Anſw. It is ſure, we have ſeen nothing, but what might have been too evidently looked for, and that we can pretend no Want of Light herein, upon theſe Grounds.

I. That the Trials of a Church, ſhould be ſuited to the Meaſure of their Talent of Light, and when this hath been in ſome more than ordinary Way diſpenſed, that ſome remarkably ſearching Times might be expected to follow; nor can it be now ſtrange to us, that ſuch Things fall in with this Day, which did not meet the Churches of Chriſt at the firſt Entry of the Reformation, who then had not ſo clear Diſcoveries of the Truth, and that Meaſure of Confirmation therein, which hath been ſince.

II That ſome unuſual Trials, and Conflicts, in the Lord's Method of Providence, ſhould be ſuited alſo to the Greatneſs of that Work, which he is bringing forth, may be no ſtrange Thing; and to ſee a Time of ſuch ſore Wreſtlings as this, when all Things ſeem to cry, and be in Pain, as *Micah* iv. 20. Yea, when

when ſome great Event of the Scripture is to be revealed to the World, and near to its full Height, and Period of Accompliſhment, (as we have ſafe Ground for Aſſurance of this Day.)

III. Nor hath this ſad and diſmal Hour on the Church, been more obvious than the provoking Cauſe hereof, in which the holy Righteouſneſs of God, may be no leſs clear, than the Cloud now is dark; when there has been ſuch a viſible falling off from that Love, Tenderneſs, and Power of Religion, that did formerly attend its Profeſſion; for theſe many Years paſt, we might have ſeen that ſome ſore and remarkable Judgment was coming, and that if we had not been in ſuch a Manner undone, we were, under ſome ſadder Stroke of ſpiritual Judgment, ready to be utterly undone.

IV. Yea, it hath been too viſible, that ſuch Evils followed the Reformed Churches, as in no Time it was ever known, that the holy God did paſs by, without ſome ſignal Evidence of his Wrath againſt the ſame before the World.

V. We know, that carnal Confidence hath a Curſe ever waiting upon it in the Scrip-

Scripture, and none can take it off, or make that thrive, which God hath himſelf curſed; and it is too viſible, how far we have gone thus out of the Way of our Strength, by ſuch eager ſeeking human Props, and Support, that we have forgot the Guide of our Youth, and Covenant of our God, and what great Things he hath formerly done in the greateſt Straits of his Church, when there was much humble truſting, that the Spirit of the Lord, would do more to recover his Truth, than all human Might or Power could do.

SECTION II.

QUESTION I.

WHat Talent, are we ſtill accountable for, to ſupport our Faith againſt the greateſt Fears *of this Time, from theſe* immediate Appearances of God, *and of the* Glory of his Power, *for the ſame* Truth and Cauſe *of the* Reformed Church, *we are now called to contend for, which hath been ſince the Reformation, when ſo ſtrong*

ſtrong and unuſual a Tide, now is againſt the ſame?

Anſw. If Men ſhut not their Eyes, and hide this great Talent of the Works of God, under the Ground, 'tis ſure none can queſtion ſuch a Seal, which before the Sun, (to the Amazement and Conviction of the World) hath been put to the Truth of the Reformed Religion; that we are now brought under ſuch a Call, as the Church of *Iſrael* was, *Deut.* iv. 34. To ask of the Times that are paſt, ſince *Iſrael*'s coming out of *Egypt*, and ſince the firſt planting of the *Gentile* Church, by the Goſpel, whether there hath been ſo great a Thing as this in the Earth, that God hath eſſayed to take to himſelf a People from the midſt of other Nations, by Temptations, by Signs, and by Wonders, and by War, and by a mighty Hand, and by an out-ſtretched Arm, and by great Terrors, according to all that the Lord our God hath done for the Reſcue of his People, in theſe laſt Times, from Antichriſtian Bondage and Darkneſs; and ſettling them in a Church-ſtate, but unto us was this ſhewed, that we might know, that the Lord

he

he is God, and there is none elſe beſide him: Ye are ſtill called to ſee, and be as Eye-witneſſes to theſe Things;

I. How bright a Day of the Goſpel of Chriſt, did go before this great Darkneſs on the Church, and what a ſolemn Triumph in theſe late Ages the Truth hath had over Antichriſt, ſo as the full Stroke and Ruin of his Kingdom, (which is ſure and eſtabliſhed in the Promiſe of God,) ſeems not now more marvellous, and above human Appearance, than what we have ſeen, in the begun Degrees of its Accompliſhment.

II. In how few Years alſo, there was, as a new Chriſtian World brought forth, in that ſwift Courſe and Progreſs which the ingathering of the Reformed Churches had, ſo as between the Year 1560, and 1621. ſuch famous Plantations of the Goſpel were ſettled in a Church-ſtate; which all may ſee was the immediate Work and Power of God; to ſhew, that none ſhould fear, or ſtagger at his Promiſe; tho' the Waters yet ſwell, and come to the Flowings of *Jordan*, and Difficulties appear unſuperable to human Senſe, after theſe great Things which the Lord hath done.

III. How

III. How extraordinary a Calling, and Excitement of Inſtruments, was then evident for the Service of that Time, and Reapers thus eminently prepared for ſo great an Harveſt of the Goſpel, as might put the World to enquire whence theſe were, in ſo numerous a Concurrence, when a few of ſuch a Spirit were ſo rarely to be found in many Ages before.

IV. Yea, ſuch an Acceſſion alſo, of ſpiritual Gifts and Endowments was then for building of the Church, as had not been formerly known, ſince the firſt coming of the Goſpel to the *Gentiles*; wherein it may be ſaid, the Glory of theſe laſt Times hath even in ſome Degree exceeded that of the firſt.

V. And can the moſt diſmal Things of this Time, countervail the Confirmations of our Faith, who have ſo clearly ſeen, with the firſt breaking up of the purer Doctrine of Chriſt, the Power and Life of Chriſtianity came therewith to the World, as a Seal, and Atteſtation thereto, beyond any Miracles, yea, how innumerable a Company, in theſe laſt Ages of different Tongues and Languages, and theſe ſo remote from one another, did not only receive the ſame Truth

Truth, but with ſuch Reſolution, adventure their Souls thereon, as might fully witneſs, they had another Proſpect of Chriſtianity, and to be in ſome other Manner raviſhed with the Glory and Beauty of the ſame, than is now in theſe Times.

VI. Such high Spring Tides of the Power and Efficacy of the Goſpel, might be evident to all, after ſo ſad a Reſtraint had been for ſo many Ages before, under Antichriſtian Darkneſs; for whatever was then, as a private Seal, on the Spirit of Chriſtians, whilſt the Witneſſes did prophecy in Sack-cloth, yet was there no ſuch Evidence and Demonſtration of the Holy Ghoſt, or a public confirmatory Seal to the Truth, as was after the Reformation.

VII. Yea, was it not the moſt ſober, ſerious, and inquiſitive Part of Men, upon a ſure Trial of the Grounds of their Faith, who did moſt firmly embrace the ſame? and how many of theſe alſo were of the greateſt Parts and Abilities, whom none could judge to adventure ſo far herein, without the higheſt Aſſurances, that this was their undoubted Intereſt and Salvation?

VIII. We

VIII. We have seen not only Men of mean and low Estate, but such of the highest Place and Quality, most chearfully adventuring whatever Interest could be dearest to them in the Earth for the Truth's Sake; yea, it was ever found that such as were most acquainted with the Reformed Religion in its Power, and lived up in their Practice to what they professed thereof, were those who with the greatest Assurance, most resolutely still adhered thereto.

IX. We have seen also, its most remarkable spreading in the World, when there could be no possible Pretence of a worldly Interest, or external Motives for the same.

X. We have seen something not only extraordinary, but even miraculous in the Joy, and Resolution of innumerable Martyrs since the Reformation, who did bear out with a more than human Strength, against a Cruelty so visibly inhuman and savage; yea, which did in some Degrees exceed that Measure of the Heathens, in the primitive Times, as being against a greater Light than theirs.

XI. And have we not seen, of what Spirit, such still have been since the Re-

formation, who were the moſt notorious Inſtruments in the Churches Perſecution, and how viſibly ſuch did act herein, under ſo impetuous an Incitement of the Devil, that as *Tertullian*, in his Apology ſpeaks of *Nero*, the Truth might boaſt in having ſuch Adverſaries.

XII. It is ſure we have ſeen, that no human Power, could yet ever undo this bleſſed Intereſt of the Reformed Religion, tho' no way, or change of Weapons, hath been left untried; but we have thus ſeen, whether ſo ſtrong, and united a Confederacy, as the Catholick League in *France* did at laſt reſolve, and not only in the Ruin of the greateſt Actors and Contrivers therein, but to a further eſtabliſhing of the Reformed Churches there, as tho' ſuch had intentionally acted for the ſame; when, if ſecond Cauſes had brought forth their ordinary Effects, it might have been judged impoſſible to fail.

XIII. We have ſeen that Iſſue of all the Counſels, Expence and Cruelty of *Philip* II. of *Spain* to bear down the Truth of the Goſpel in the *Netherlands*, which was to the furtheſt ſettling of this illuſtrious State, and the Church of Chriſt there; yea, how their conſpicuous

ous Rise and Flourishing, even in the Externals, and their resolute Adherence to the Truth of Christ, did most visibly keep together.

XIV. We know that Deluge of Blood, which so quickly followed the *French* Massacre; and the most dismal Time which ever that Nation knew, did then visibly contemporate with such a Time of their greatest Rage and Persecution against the Truth, and that Event of the third Vial most clearly fulfilled herein, *Rev.* xvi. 5, 6. 'Thou art Righteous, O 'Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt 'be, because thou hast judged thus, for 'they have shed the Blood of thy Saints 'and Prophets, and thou hast given them 'Blood to drink in great Measure.'

XV. Yea, have we not seen how four Kings of *France*, successively were in less than thirty Years, taken away in the same continued Pursuit, how to destroy the Church there, in whom that whole Race of the *Valois* was thus extinct; yea, in the Manner of their Death, were most remarkable Monuments of divine Judgment, as the most famous Writers of that Time do attest.

XVI. We have seen what marvellous Effects did follow those bloody Years of Queen *Mary*'s Reign in *England*, to promote and commend the Protestant Doctrine to Mens Consciences there, with so great a Triumph, as it had in the Sufferings of such choice and excellent Witnesses for Christ, and hath brought in more Rent to the Praise and Glory of their blessed Head, than may to the furthest compense all that Blood of the Saints there, tho' highly precious in the Eyes of the Lord.

XVII. We have seen likewise the Blood and Cruelty of late, against the Protestants in *Bohemia*, in a short Time most visibly returned on the Authors thereof, and how the immediate Finger of God might be seen in calling forth the *Swedes* to avenge the same, and in that desolating Stroke which followed in *Germany*.

XVIII. We have seen in these late Times the Issue of that horrid Massacre on the Protestants in *Ireland*, to the utter Ruin, (in a very few Years after,) of that barbarous Party, who had thus acted herein.

XIX. We

XIX. We have seen what wonderful Providences did attend the Actings of that poor handful of Protestants in the Valleys of *Piedmont*, since the Reformation, upon the Account of that bloody Massacre which was set on foot there against them, which was so astonishing, as all might see an extraordinary Appearance of the Lord herein, as is clearly attested by the most faithful Histories of that Time.

XX. And can it be forgot unto this Day, how visibly a divine Hand did appear in breaking that great *Spanish Armado*, in the Year 1588, which had been for some Years in contriving against *England*.

XXI. Astonishing, and specially demonstrative of the immediate Power and Presence of God, and Matter of Wonder and Praise also for after Ages, was that solemn Time of the Reformation of the *Church in Scotland*, for planting the Reformed Religion there; with that Zeal and Oneness of Spirit, as did then appear in all Ranks to embrace and adhere to the Profession thereof, amidst the greatest Threatnings of their Adversaries, so as a few Years did bring forth

that, which would have seemed strange for an Age to accomplish; yea, that we find betwixt the last Martyr for the Truth there, who was burnt at St. *Andrews*, 1558, and the Establishment of the Protestant Religion, and full Abolishment of Popery, with the full Concurrence of civil Authority herein, in *July* 1560, was but little above two Years, to shew what great Things the Lord can do, above all human Council or Confidence.

XXII. 'Tis sure, we have seen in what remarkable Degrees these last Vials of the holy Judgment of God, have taken place on the Kingdom of Antichrist, and how conspicuous the Event hath been of that Prophecy, 2 *Thess.* ii. 8. in these great Effects and Consumption thereof by the Ministry of the Gospel, as an assured Pledge of the full Accomplishment of what remains herein.

XXIII. And as every Step of the Church's Rise, hath been still advanced in a continued Conflict betwixt the Truth and Antichrist, so have we still seen, when the Assault and Opposition hath been greatest, its most remarkable Tendency to a greater Victory; which were

it

it rightly considered, upon clear and solid Grounds from the Scripture, the most formidable Appearances of Trouble from this Adversary, would with more Comfort than Fear this Day be looked on; so that whatever be the neareſt and most immediate Events, yet it is sure, as the Lord is true, (whose Word is passed hereon,) that whosoever gives their Power and Strength to support that Interest of Antichrist, shall lose the Day, and find their Cause desperate, for the Party with whom they contend herein is the Son of God, against whom no human Power shall be ever able to stand. These are but a few, which are here mentioned, of the great Acts of our God, in Behalf of his Truth, to be still as present in our Sight, in a Time when the Spirits of many are ready to stagger and faint; and here mentioned, to lay no Stress or Weight of the Authority of the Truth and Doctrine of our Profession thereon, but on the alone Revelation of the Scripture; but they are such an undeniable Seal for confirming our Faith, and of so known, public and famous Evidence, as should be no less considered, and taken to Heart now, than

in

in the Time when the Lord thus appeared herein.

SECTION III.

QUESTION I.

WHat preſent Judgment *are we called to have of this* Time, *upon clear and aſſured Grounds from the* Scripture *; that we may know under what* Aſpect *thereof, the preſent* State of Religion, *and of the* Reformed Churches *is under, when ſo great a* Criſis *is this Day, as would ſeem to be in the very Height of its Conflict; whether as to Life or Death?*

Anſw. It is no preſent Appearance of the Time that muſt direct our Faith, nor ſhould we either ſtretch our Fears or Expectations of Things and Events, beyond what the God of Truth doth warrant in his Word, but 'tis clear, if we credit the ſame, and admit the Divinity of the New Teſtament, there is no juſt Cauſe of Heſitation or Darkneſs, as to what the Lord is bringing forth for his Church now

now in these latter Days, nor can there be any Pretence to seek another Light, (either from the Stars above, or the Diviners of this Time,) when so woful a Trade hath got up in the World, that Men will thus go to the God of *Ekron*, as tho' there were not a God in *Israel*, or such a Thing, as his written Oracles to enquire at, when 'tis sure these lie open, and with a clear and distinct Sound speak to all who have a serious and unprejudged Spirit.

I. That the Church, under the New-Testament, hath now passed and gone through that most dismal and continued Trial herein, which was to go over her Head, under *Antichrist*'s Reign and Height, and whatever Appearance he now hath in great Wrath, yet is it sure and evident, that the Winter is past, and the Church's Spring begun; and a few Steps further off, that Judgment which is now hastning on, will at length end the Quarrel; so that by a near Converse with the Word, we may clearly see from what Point the Church's Course and Motion this Day lies, and how exactly it keeps, in the Certainty thereof, by the clear Conduct of the Scriptures

tures of Truth, where a full Map of her whole Course and Passage through Time is clearly shewed.

II. That we may now with some clear Evidence judge, and have our Faith persuaded hereof, that the Church's Interest is upon the rising Hand, and on a present Advance, tho' nothing would seem more contradictory than all visible Grounds now are; since this cannot fail, *John* iii. 30. That Jesus Christ, in his Kingdom, in the Earth, must increase; yea, that the Scripture so clearly points forth *Antichrist*'s Ruin and Progress of his Fall and Downcasting, with Resemblance to that great Judgment on *Pharaoh*, as an evident Type hereof; in the same judicial Strokes of Induration, on both, and gradual Progress herein, by one Plague after another, until the last and greatest Assault, as was then at the *Red-Sea*, hath the same Effect for a more glorious Appearance of God, in the greatest Step of Judgment, and Victory over this Adversary, when not only the Song of *Moses*, but of the Lamb also, shall be then sung, *Rev.* xv. 3. as importing something more glorious and a greater Brightness to be put on this illustrious Act

of

of divine Judgment, reſerved to theſe laſt Times, when a more immediate Appearance of the Lord will be ſeen, than in any former Deliverances of his Church.

III. It is no conjectural Thing, but what by a clear Scripture Conduct, we may ſee, that this Time of the Church now, under ſo notable a Criſis in her Caſe, is evidently falling under that remarkable Aſſault and Conflict with that Adverſary, before the accompliſhing of that Vial on his Seat and Throne, as we may ſee, *Rev.* xvii. 13, 14. That when ſo conſpicuous a Step of the Church's Victory is near; the Oppoſition thereto alſo will be in ſome higher Degree proportionable to the ſame, when the great Men of the Earth, and ſuch who ſhall receive Power as Kings, one Hour with the Beaſt, ſhall have one Mind, and give their Power and Strength thereto, and ſhall make War with the Lamb, but the Lamb ſhall overcome them, for he is King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, &c. Nor is it found through the Scripture, where the Lord hath done any great Thing for his Church, but ſome unuſual Darkneſs, and ſore Wreſtlings have ſtill

gone

gone before, and ſhould be no Matter of ſtaggering to our Faith, (whatever it be of preſent Fears,) to ſee ſo diſmal a Time of Trial as now is, and amazing Heighth of Trouble beyond what former Times have known, when one of the greateſt Events of Providence in Behalf of the Church, ſince the revealing of Chriſt to the World, until his ſecond coming, is aſſuredly near in the Fall and Overthrow of the Man of Sin.

IV. We have clear Ground alſo to judge, that ſo great an Eclipſe, as ſeems almoſt univerſally over the State of the Reformed Churches, is no going down of the Sun thereon, (whatever did befal the moſt famous Eaſtern Churches to an utter Diſſipation thereof;) if theſe different Periods of Time be juſtly conſidered, how their Sun-ſet did then fall in with the Entry of that great Apoſtacy of the Chriſtian Church, and with that long and diſmal Night of Antichriſt's Reign; whilſt now this Hour of Trial on the Churches, doth meet in that bleſſed Period of Antichriſt's begun Fall, and of a growing Light of the Goſpel, and when the Scripture ſo clearly warrants our Faith herein, that the Work of Providence

dence is to plant, and not cut off, but to bring forward that Intereſt of the Reformed Churches, in the founding of which, the Mediator hath ſo eminently appeared in the Glory of his Power in theſe laſt Times.

V. It is ſure, we now live in the Evening, and Extremity of Time, when the Motions of Providence may be expected to be more quick and ſpeedy, as being ſo near the Centre, and to the laſt *Epocha*, and Period of all prophetic Chronology; wherein the Glory of God, in his Truth and Faithfulneſs, ſhall moſt eminently ſhine forth, and theſe Scripture Truths, which were formerly dark and abſtruſe, with that Evidence ſhine forth in the Event, as ſhall cauſe Men to wonder at their former Thoughts and Stumblings thereat. And here, I muſt ſay, that there is ſuch a Sight now in the Earth, as the *Romiſh Church*, in its Complex Frame and State, in ſo different a Mold caſt from any Power or Juriſdiction elſe, and ſuch a Compound of a civil, and ſpiritual Monarchy, in one and the ſame Perſon, is ſo ſolemn and undeniable a Seal to the Chriſtian Faith, and Divinity of the New Teſtament;

that 'tis ſtrange why this is not improved more, againſt the Atheiſm of this Time, that ſuch a viſible Event of the Scripture is now in Being, which was ſo clearly foretold by the Holy Ghoſt, Fifteen hundred Years ago, with its proper Circumſtances, as to the Manner of that Antichriſtian State, with its Riſe, Growth, and Duration, as is to Admiration ſtill evident to the World, when not the leaſt Shadow or Appearance of ſo ſtrange future Emergencies was to be ſeen, or could have entred Mens Thoughts; to ſhew, it only could be revealed to the Church by him, to whom all his Works are known from the Beginning. This I have looked on, as ſuch a Confirmation to the Truth of Chriſtianity, that no Miracles in the firſt Times of the Church, could have more Evidence for the ſame; yea, if ſuch a Party were not in Being, both what it now is, and in former Ages hath been, it might, in another Manner, ſtagger the Faith of the Saints, to a queſtioning the Truth of the Scripture, than its moſt formidable Appearance this Day can do.

VI. I ſhall but add here, that we know and are ſure the Lord hath reſerved his greateſt

greateſt Works to theſe latter Days, wherein his Judgments ſhall be manifeſt; and that one of the moſt eminent Manifeſtations of his Glory, before the cloſe of Time, ſhall be conſpicuous in the Fall of Antichriſt, on whoſe Ruins that glorious Houſe which Chriſt is yet to have for himſelf, both of *Jews* and *Gentiles*, ſhall be prepared and built up; and tho' this great Eclipſe of Antichriſtian Darkneſs, ſhould yet more prevail, even over the viſible Profeſſion of the Truth in the Churches of *Britain* and *Ireland*, there is no Cauſe to be ſtaggered in the Faith of *Rome*'s fatal Period, being near, but to look hereon, according to the Scripture, as that laſt Attempt of that wounded Adverſary, which will be found in the Iſſue to have the moſt immediate Connection with his greateſt Downfal, and the reviving Glory of the Church; *for ſtrong is the Lord God who judgeth her.*

SECTION IV.

QUESTION.

WHat is ſpecially called for, *in this Day, of ſuch as are accountable for ſo great a Talent of Light, and Confirmations to our Faith?*

Anſw. If this were ſuitably taken to Heart, we could not but reckon ourſelves under the greateſt Excitement and Call, to ſuch an Improvement hereof.

I. That we account it not enough to have a Faith for quieting our own Spirits, but alſo to confirm others, by putting to our Seal that God is true, in the great Aſſurances of his Word, and to ſanctify him before the World; which is ſo important a Duty, as the Lord was wroth even with a *Moſes* and *Aaron*, for one ſhort-coming, when he called for the ſame, *Numb.* xx. 12. and 'tis ſure, in no Time was ſuch a ſpecial Truſt more repoſed thereon, than in this Age, both as a public Debt on the Church, and perſonal on each Chriſtian, how to witneſs for the Lord, upon that great Intereſt of his Faithfulneſs, and for tranſ-

tranſmitting the ſame to the Ages to come, by a confirmatory Seal and Teſtimony thereto.

II. To reckon ourſelves alſo under ſome more than ordinary Call this Day, (each in their preſent Capacity and Station,) to appear for the Credit of the Truth, and ſtem ſo viſible and impetuous a Tide, as is now running of Diſtruſt, and of a diſcreditable Faintneſs; for it may be ſaid, never was the Church under the New Teſtament, ſo remarkably held under ſuch a Trial, as that wherein the Lord did prove the Church of *Iſrael*, *Numb.* xiv. or had a more evident Reſemblance thereto, in the ſame Circumſtances as in this Day, if they were ſeriouſly pondered; As,

I. How, in the ſame Manner, ſuch a falſe and evil Report is too viſibly raiſed upon the bleſt Ways of the Lord, to diſcourage and faint the Spirits of his People, as was then by the Spies, that there were inſuperable Difficulties in the Way of the Promiſe, by Reaſon of the *Anakims*, and of their walled Cities, and did thus oppoſe the Credit of Senſe, to all theſe Aſſurances which God had given to their Faith.

II. That this highly dishonourable Cowardice and Distrust, did so seize on that People, as was like to resolve in a visible Revolt, and to cry for a Leader to go back to *Egypt* again; which, amongst too many in this Time may be justly feared.

III. That this was after such extraordinary Confirmations, which the Lord had given to the Faith of his Church then, who had by his own immediate and outstretched Hand, so lately brought them out of the *House of Bondage*, and from the Iron Furnace in *Egypt*, as rendered their Misbelief to be a Guilt under such Aggravations, as the holy God did in that Manner plead, Verse 22. *These ten Times have they tempted me, who have seen my Glory, and my Miracles, which I did in the Wilderness*, &c.

IV. But herein, we hope, and are confidently sure of a blessed Disparity in this Resemblance, as to the Numerousness of such, who shall be found of the Reformed Churches, to act something of that Part, which these heroic Witnesses, *Caleb* and *Joshua* did; and were then put to stand alone therein; who through Grace, shall yet appear with some Measure of that

that Spirit, and withstand so high a Tide of Fears, Discouragement and Unbelief, as is at this Day; and thus to plead against the same as these did, *Numb.* xiv. 9. If the Lord delight in us, then let us not rebel against him, neither fear the greatest Difficulties that can be in the Way, *&c.*

V. And is not the same Precedent of Providence, of so singular a Respect, as the Lord did then testify to his *Caleb* and *Joshua*, (who were of another Spirit, in following him fully, in that Day,) a continued Assurance for all who shall be helped to any honourable Appearance of this Kind, by making them see, and inherit the Truth of his Promise; yea, that such a Residue, as out-lives this great and amazing Storm, shall have something of that Testimony to bear also, which *Caleb* gave, *Joshua* xiv. 8, 10. *My Brethren, which went up with me, made the Heart of the People faint, but I fully followed the Lord my God, and now behold the Lord hath kept me alive*, &c. O blessed they, whose Souls are raised with that holy Zeal for the Truth, to stand up in this great Breach, by a resolute Profession of their Faith, and Witness to the Faithful-

Faithfulneſs of God, as ſuch great and extraordinary Confirmations given thereto, now call for.

III. It is one of the ſpecial Duties of this Day, we ſtand alſo accountable for, how to ſtem this high and growing Tide of Prejudice, and Reproach againſt the Reformed Religion, which in ſome unuſual Way is now aloft, and raging; and by Manifeſtation of the Truth, to gain ſome more awful Regard hereof on Mens Conſcience, that they may ſee ſomething of the Glory of our Profeſſion, and in what Manner it maintains its Conqueſt, as no Way elſe can poſſibly claim;

I. Which reckons none to be the true and genuine Profeſſors hereof, who embrace not the ſame upon Evidence, and with reſpect to its intrinſic Excellency and Worth; nor does judge the Intereſt of Religion to go by Number and Poll, where this is wanting; but purſues that End, to have Men engaged firſt to be Chriſtians, that they may be true and ſincere Proteſtants; and therefore can admit no ſuch Methods of any baſe Compliance with the Humour and Intereſts of Men, which its Principles will not bear.

II. Which

II. Which, in its Course is ever regular and certain, according to the Rule of an unchangeable and eternal Truth, without Dependence on the Will of Man herein, or any mutable Revolutions of the Time.

III. Which doth with the greatest Lustre shine forth in the brighest Light, and is maintained by the clearest Knowledge; yea, by the furthest Plainness, and Openness of Heart, towards all, commends itself; so that the World may see, it espouseth not Mens Affection, before it gains on their Conscience; and it hath their Judgment fixed on a judicious Trial, before their Resolution; nor accounts the Truth of Religion, can ever subsist by an external Shew and Profession, without its known Evidence and the Efficacy thereof on Mens Souls.

IV. Which sincerely follows the Catholick Interest of Christianity, and public Good of Mankind, in promoting the great Ends of the Gospel, so as the World may see its highest Intent is to exalt all divine Institutions, and advance the Simplicity and Spirituality of Gospel Administrations, (according to the revealed Rule) amongst Men, as that which doth

most

moſt nearly concern the Vitals of Religion, and an inward Life of Communion with God.

V. Which pleads an impartial Trial of all its Adverſaries, whether the Principles of our Profeſſion, or of Popery, give the greateſt Security to Civil Government, and founds the ſtrongeſt Obligations to Magiſtracy, and to all Civil and Moral Duties, by which the Awe and venerable Eſteem of Religion is kept up in a Nation. It is high Time, that Men ſhould ceaſe to be implicite, and become expreſs upon this greateſt Intereſt they have within Time, which is the Truth of their Profeſſion in the Matter of Religion; when a Deceit or Miſtake here is of an eternal Concern: Upon which Account, without reſpect to Intereſt, Party, or Education, I have this Day ſought to know the Truth, and what Adverſaries could poſſibly pretend to reproach, or prejudge any for the Reformed Religion; all they can do, is but to charge Mens Corruption and Offences in their Practice, upon the Rule and Principles of their Profeſſion, that can never give the leaſt Latitude or Connivance thereto, but is clear as the Sun; when, on the other Hand,

Hand, I could know no other Way to embrace such a Profession, as Popery, but by turning Atheist, in the first Place, and then quitting both Religion and Reason at once: But I can say, in a resolute Adherence to the Doctrine of the Reformed Church, I fear not to adventure my Soul, and enter into an eternal State.

FINIS.